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Constructing Texan Identity at *Texas Monthly* Magazine

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Constructing Texan Identity at *Texas Monthly* Magazine

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Dedication

To Marcus

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Constructing Texan Identity at *Texas Monthly* Magazine

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Today's media are a significant force in aiding individuals in constructing an understanding of their own identities and their place within the world. Therefore, closer attention should be paid to the processes by which media themselves construct those identities and make them available to audiences. This case study explores the means by which *Texas Monthly* magazine constructs a sense of Texan identity. Employing a media sociology perspective, the study combines three research techniques: content analysis, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis. The magazine includes primarily white and wealthy individuals in its version of Texan identity, suggesting that this identity is narrowly applicable, despite the actual diversity of the state. The magazine's content does little to define, deepen, or critique that geographic identity. Furthermore, it seems difficult for the *Texas Monthly* staff to explain exactly the notion of Texan identity that provides a foundation for the magazine's composition, and advertisers appear to be little

concerned with this concept. An examination of the magazine's coverage of President George W. Bush additionally reveals the indistinct and somewhat arbitrary nature of Texan identity within *Texas Monthly*, as Bush's geographic identity alters in accordance with his political status. Overall, the magazine's image of Texan identity is largely positive yet insubstantial, a surprising finding given its claim to be the "national magazine of Texas." This construction of Texan identity suggests and supports the magazine's need to preserve a positive and commercially appealing image of Texas, both for its readers and for its financial success. In constructing the magazine, then, its staff must weigh this need against the goal of journalism to provide wide-ranging and critical perspectives for audiences. The roles of both consumerism and citizenship in today's media world are clearly demonstrated in the unique position of *Texas Monthly* as a journalistic product.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

What does it mean to be Texan?

For Texans and for those outside the state, answers to this question can come from many sources: everyday experience, education, and even products with "Texas" brands. The construction of Texas in a whole range of media messages, however, especially reinforces and promotes the notion of a distinct Texan identity, worthy of differentiation from all other geographic identities. Many Texans prize this identity and view it as a source of values that shapes their lives and choices.

Yet the foundation for this purportedly distinctive identity may no longer be as clear. We now live in a highly mobile society where people increasingly decline to participate in community activities. Most people learn about their worlds, even their immediate surroundings, through the media. Our knowledge of history and culture is increasingly reliant on commercial media messages rather than on traditional education or personal experience. Media have become a critical force in our understandings of ourselves, each other, and our relationships within our larger communities and the world. Any identity, geographic or otherwise, that we choose for ourselves may rely on information gained from contact with media sources. Ideas about femininity come from *Cosmopolitan* magazine, masculinity from *Maxim*; ideas about racial identity come from Black Entertainment Television and MySpace Latino; and even ideas about age might come from *AARP Magazine*. The range of possibilities for our selves and the ways we imagine others are largely based upon these mediated experiences.

For Texans seeking knowledge about their state and about their Texan identity, one major media source of ideas and information could be *Texas Monthly* magazine. *Texas Monthly* is one of the most important Texas media outlets; indeed, it is the only statewide magazine that can claim both journalistic significance and a large circulation. The magazine covers a variety of topics and has a longstanding and widespread reputation for journalistic excellence.

In its unique role as a significant statewide journalistic product, *Texas Monthly* possesses noteworthy power to define "Texan identity" for those who read it. Its audience learns much about what "Texas" and "Texans" are, and about what is important in the state. Other media messages and sources of cultural information complement such magazine journalism in defining Texas, but journalism's social and political responsibilities to the public amplify its role in the process of place definition. Therefore, *Texas Monthly* is an important representation of Texan identity for its audience as they develop their own understanding of the state.

However, the key concern of this study is how this important publication portrays Texan identity, and whether that version of Texan identity balances the need for a commercial appeal to the magazine's audience with the attention to the full range of social and political issues that are typically the realm of journalistic concern. Given that the version of Texan identity promoted by *Texas Monthly* must incorporate both sets of considerations, I consider to what degree the Texan identity presented in the magazine can serve as a basis for a critical and thoughtful understanding of Texas, one which benefits the audience in their roles as citizens of Texas.

Because commercial considerations are necessarily part of the magazine's decision-making process, the sense of Texan identity presented in *Texas Monthly* may have changed following a significant alteration to its business structure. *Texas Monthly* was founded in 1973 but is no longer an independent magazine. Since 1998, it has instead been part of a larger media conglomerate called Emmis Communications, which is based in Indianapolis. However, research on media conglomerates' impact on their newly acquired subsidiaries does not speak highly of this transition. Researchers have noted repeatedly that the quality of journalistic products tends to decrease when they are acquired by larger companies, which typically require greater efficiency, higher profit margins, and deeper consideration for advertisers' needs. These changes also typically diminish opportunities to produce high-quality, unique, and thoroughly researched journalism (Bagdikian, 2004; Picard, 2008). Moreover, media consolidation tends to have a homogenizing effect on media messages on a larger scale. The variety in media products that existed among many independent producers diminishes with the decrease in ownership diversity (McChesney, 2004).

Texas Monthly, in this altered business context, may have lost some of its willingness to cover less commercially appealing topics that – while highly important to the state – simply seem less appealing to readers than "softer" topics. For example, coverage of Texas' border with Mexico and its complex political and social status is not frequently found in the magazine. The borderlands are still within the political boundaries of the state, but a regular reader of the magazine may notice that coverage of this region is largely absent from the magazine's picture of Texas. Instead, nationally known

celebrities appear in the magazine and on its cover, making it look much like other magazines on the newsstand that aren't focused on Texas. Yet this seems contrary to the mission of the magazine, which in naming itself as a regional media product would seem more likely to feature people and issues of that entire region. Such selectivity in the content of the magazine's purported Texan identity may reflect particular considerations within its editorial and business processes.

Texas Monthly is a distinctive media product that, perhaps uniquely among local and regional American magazines today, must navigate a precarious path between both a passionately held geographic identity and a complex political and social geographic reality. Furthermore, even though many stories in the magazine relate to current events, the magazine need not adhere to traditional news values as would other journalistic products. This means that the *Texas Monthly* staff has even greater freedom in determining the topics and people it will cover. Rather than being limited to the top stories of the day, the magazine's content can range freely across Texas' past and present, and encompass its entire geographical and cultural reality; therefore, story selection must be based upon other criteria. Those selection criteria are not immediately apparent and are not stated explicitly for readers.

In any case, given that the magazine is produced at least in part to generate profit for its owners, the criteria for story selection have to include a combination of journalistic and commercial values. The concern of this study, then, is the process by which the magazine's editorial and business staff, in conjunction with the magazine's owners, prioritizes those values in composing the content of the magazine. How do these values

shape the magazine's content and constrain the representation of Texan identity in the magazine? Answering this question is important, because by constructing its version of Texas on the basis of commercial appeal, *Texas Monthly* may delimit its audience's sense of Texan identity in ways that are politically and socially damaging, despite the best of intentions. For example, if readers of the magazine learn little about the border region from the magazine, they may be less well prepared to act upon – or may not even be aware of – the significant problems facing their state that involve this substantial region. Furthermore, they may form a notion of Texan identity that does not encompass the people, culture, and issues of this region. If one of journalism's goals is to provide a full range of information for audiences' consideration during the implementation of democratic processes, then it seems reasonable to ask why *Texas Monthly* infrequently discusses such an important region and its concerns. Other factors in its editorial and business practices might have moved the focus of its content elsewhere, but those factors, as mentioned above, are not made explicit.

Texas Monthly is far from unique in its effort to balance these multiple factors during the magazine's production. As noted above, numerous media products are based upon varying concepts of self-identity, or collective identities; they tell different stories and spread different images about these groups, yet most must also do so while generating a profit. Some are part of larger media conglomerates and some are not. Yet the challenge of promoting consumer activity while also aiding in community and democratic goals is common to most media organizations in capitalist media systems. Therefore, although *Texas Monthly* as a magazine is primarily concerned with the state of

Texas itself, its structure and production processes, along with its audience's opportunities for engagement and understanding, represent far greater concerns regarding the role of media in democratic communities today.

This study uses three research methods to explore how this particular magazine engages in its own combination of editorial and business practices, and how they might impact the magazine's representation of Texan identity. First, the content of the magazine over the course of nearly 20 years is analyzed to examine the image of Texas provided in its pages over time, as well as the ways that the magazine may have altered its content to address commercial values. Those values, such the need to attract a readership that appeals to advertisers, must be considered in conjunction with the normative goals of journalism. The ideal role of journalism, for this study, is to "provide comprehensive and representative images…of nation and society" for the purpose of citizens' participation in democracy (Gans, 1979, p. 312). In other words, journalism should, from my perspective here, promote citizenship as its primary goal, over consumerism and the messages carried by advertising.

Second, interviews were conducted with *Texas Monthly* and Emmis staff members, as well as with advertisers in the magazine. In creating the magazine, its staff must decide which story ideas meet the magazine's criteria for "Texanness," while also attempting to balance editorial integrity, journalistic responsibility, and the business demands of creating a saleable product. Their approach to this tricky balance is considered with regard to the magazine's acquisition by Emmis, and their interview responses address the effects of that acquisition on both their editorial and business

standards. As a whole, these interviews offer insight into the editorial and business processes of the magazine that lead to the construction of a particular "Texan identity" within its pages.

Finally, I address a specific case in which *Texas Monthly*'s version of Texan identity may have affected its representation of a major political figure: President George W. Bush. In this textual analysis, I examine the ways in which the magazine used Texan identity to characterize Bush during his political career, and explore the changes that his geographic characterization underwent as his political fortunes first rose and then declined. This textual analysis explores how the magazine's construction of Texan identity is applied in a political context.

In contemporary society, individuals' increased mobility and their immersion in media products make their "sense of place" ever more dependent on media constructions of place identity. That identity, among others, serves as the basis for individuals' understanding of themselves and their relationship to their communities, including their appropriate roles and actions. Journalism provides key ideas and images that individuals need to form their personal identities and to participate in civic life. However, if the sense of identity available to its audience is strongly affected by commercial considerations, altering the composition of the identity made available for consideration, the resulting means for individuals' identity construction and their participation may be altered as well.

Therefore, the forces that shape a "sense of place" or geographic identity within journalism are deserving of scrutiny. How do journalists and the commercial enterprises

for which they work balance the desire to create profit with the need to provide these citizens with this sense of identity, and how are the respective values of these two groups made evident during their work? The role of journalism in aiding audiences' formation of a "place identity" is subject to these same values. A close examination of *Texas Monthly*'s construction of "Texas" reveals how the magazine develops and presents its own version of "Texan identity" for readers' assimilation and use in citizenship, and how a range of forces coalesce to shape that identity in the magazine's pages. As individuals increasingly use media like this magazine to understand their own identities, we should endeavor to understand what this may mean for them, for their communities, for media organizations, and for the future of mediated democracy. *Texas Monthly* is but one of the media organizations implicated in this challenging situation, and represents an opportunity to begin to explore the present and future condition of commercial media and their impact on communities and democracy in this global era.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

This study explores the content of a particular magazine – *Texas Monthly* – and the construction of a sense of geographic (Texan) identity within its pages. Such an analysis involves a number of distinct and complex concepts, including the idea of a "sense of place"; the role of media, specifically journalism, in defining places and their identities; and the effects of corporate ownership on journalism. This analysis also utilizes a particular approach in exploring the conjunction of these concepts, drawn from media sociology. The use of geographic identity in political discourse will also be addressed, specifically as it is applied in a commercial magazine based upon a specific place identity.

As mentioned in the introduction, the primary means by which citizens form a "sense of place" in today's mobile and media-saturated society may now be media messages. The "sense of place" concept, as will be illustrated here, refers to the conjunction of an individual's physical experience of a location with the experience of the culture, ideologies, and power relations of that location. The specific sense of a geographic identity that individuals hold, moreover, allows them to engage with their places in specific ways, or perhaps causes them to fail to engage. The media aid in the construction of place identities for their audiences, and journalistic products also provide fundamental ideas and images both for the formation of a "sense of place" and for democratic interactions concerning that place.

However, these media constructions of place identity may be problematic, especially when messages about a place identity present not only ideological perspectives that may exclude some groups, but also might delimit information and ideas for commercial reasons, such as the desire to attract a specific audience. In the case of journalism, many critics have noted that a transition from independent to corporate ownership brings with it a decline in the quality of news, in that less substantial political and social coverage is provided. A greater willingness to aid advertisers in reaching a specific audience also may develop, especially at magazine operations, leading to the alteration of content and style. This motivation for increased profit from the "sense of place" presented in a particular regional or city magazine may result in the use of a place's representation as a "brand," in which the geographic identity shown is most relevant to the audience in their role as consumers, rather than as citizens engaged in the democratic processes of their place.

Clearly, an analysis of how the representation of place is formed within a specific publication must involve this entire range of considerations: the editorial processes by which a particular geographic identity is represented, the business processes through which that representation is funded, and the industrial and ideological considerations that affect that representation from within and without. Therefore, in this study, a media sociology approach is utilized to explore how this broad variety of influences interacts to shape the magazine's ultimate content. This approach allows for the examination of all these factors in depth, as well as for a normative assessment of their outcome. In this study, that assessment is also made possible through a detailed case study of one

particular topic covered by this magazine: George W. Bush and his political career. Through the in-depth exploration of this coverage, it is possible to examine how political realities are presented through the lens of "Texan identity" in *Texas Monthly*, thereby illustrating one specific instance in which the construction of Texan identity in this magazine might have affected its presentation of political topics for its audience. By considering how Texan identity is constructed in *Texas Monthly* on these multiple levels, a description of this magazine's "sense of place" – its "Texan identity" – can be obtained, and its possible consequences for its audience's own geographic identities may also be explored. We can then question whether commercial media can provide a wide-ranging and democratically satisfying sense of place for their audiences.

Journalism and a Sense of Place

This study adopts Carey's perspective on communication as forming culture itself. Carey argued that communication acts, including the products of mass communication, constitute "a symbolic process whereby reality is produced, maintained, repaired, and transformed" (1992, p. 23). Clearly mass communication – including magazines like *Texas Monthly* – contributes to the formation of individuals' understanding of the culture in which they live. The information provided by mass communication about the values, ideology, and activities of a given culture is critical in shaping individuals' experience of their world.

Mass communication's power to form smaller sub-communities out of a given culture has also been the topic of analysis by numerous scholars. In particular, Anderson

(1991) has described the power of print media within a capitalist economy to create what he calls "imagined communities," within which individuals share values, their worldview and an understanding of their commonalities. As a result, Anderson argues, capitalist print media have contributed to the rise of nationalism and the formation of nations. Print media provide the information and paradigm necessary for citizens to unite and understand themselves as members of a common cause and community.

Carey and Anderson's work clearly connects to that of Robert Park, who preceded them and was an early theorist of the role of media in community formation. More specifically, Park, a Chicago sociologist, examined the role of newspapers in constructing urban communities, and argued in 1938 that, within cities, "communication…spins a web of custom and mutual expectation which binds together social entities" (1972, p. 102). Park's analysis, seemingly a precursor to Carey's view of communication and culture, argued that newspapers united citizens from multiple cultural and ethnic backgrounds in increasingly diverse urban settings. Park lived at a time of high immigration and rapid social change, and he was fascinated by the ways that Chicago's immigrant media and mainstream newspapers each attempted to unite their communities. The information and perspectives provided by each type of media spoke to these communities differently, and – as Anderson might say – thereby aided in the formation of imagined communities within the very real physical locale of Chicago.

Park's ideas, therefore, are very much implicated in this study. This study questions how *Texas Monthly*, as a regional magazine, imagines Texas as a place, and how it provides information and imagery to its readers to engage them in that

construction. The group of readers engaging with *Texas Monthly* are thereby drawn to see themselves as fitting into this community, literally "subscribing to" the version of Texas presented in the magazine. This phenomenon clearly represents a fascinating case of media's power to construct and unite an audience into a common concept of a place.

This concept of "place," however, requires a more complex definition. Certainly, one way to define "place" is as a physical location, with clearly defined boundaries that are understood in political terms, used as referents for governance and for denoting where one is located at a given moment in time. However, this denotative definition of "place" does not include the affective and cultural connotations of how it feels to be present in a particular location.

For this study, then, a definition of "place" that incorporates a cultural and experiential perspective is more useful. In this definition, a place also contains aspects of that location's culture and is inextricably linked to people's actual experiences of that place. As Massey writes, a place is "constructed out of a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at a particular locus" (1993, p. 66). One's experience of a place is dependent upon the coincidental occurrence of multiple forces in a specific physical location, not merely upon the location itself. The experience is subject to social, cultural, and political forces, as well as to the effects of the presence of other people and objects in that location. This interaction of forces results in what Harvey calls a "dialectical interplay" of various power relations, all affecting the individual and his or her sense of that place differently (1996, p. 316). It is this combination of forces and

activities that provides a larger "sense of place" than does merely standing in a specific spot on a map.

If a "sense of place" is dependent on this complex coincidence, then different forces or people in that coincidental moment can play unequal roles in shaping our experience. Some forces may welcome us to a place, while others deny our sense of belonging. It is for this reason that a "sense of place" becomes an ongoing political and ideological reality, rather than an isolated moment of awareness. Cresswell states that place can be "a tool in the creation, maintenance and transformation of relations of domination, oppression and exploitation" (2004, p. 29). Similarly, Halttunen argues that we may witness "a politics of place that is reactionary and exclusionary, using place to define one group of people against others" (2006, p. 7). *Texas Monthly*, for example, creates and maintains a sense of Texas that distinguishes it as a place versus other places, as Cresswell describes; furthermore, some individuals may be shown to merit inclusion in this place as worthy Texans, and others do not. This type of exclusionary sense of place is a significant issue for this analysis of *Texas Monthly*.

While a "sense of place" can be laden with political and ideological significance, however, it can also be extremely important to individuals' feeling of social and cultural belonging. This sense of place has real affective value for many – whether it is a sense of being "Texan," "American," or another feeling of geographic identity. Tuan describes the emotional role of a sense of place as "an analeptic – a creative solution – for the threatening awareness of being alone in a world that is ultimately unresponsive" (1992, p. 29). A sense of place allows one the opportunity to feel united with the other individuals

in the immediate area; even if these individuals share nothing else in common, at least they stand on a literal "common ground." This feeling is important in a contemporary world that can feel fractured and "groundless."

The development of that common sense of place occurs on many fronts in people's lives. Certainly education and everyday experiences, gained from living in the physical world, aid in the development of this sense. However, in a society where people increasingly learn about even their most immediate local surroundings via the media, communication clearly contributes much to a sense of place. Again, Anderson's concept of imagined communities comes to mind: individuals can learn about their geographic surroundings via the media, and also learn to participate in those constructed places by adopting elements of that constructed place-identity. As a result, as Preston describes, one's "sense of place" and of personal identity with regard to that sense becomes "widely implicated in patterns of thought and action" (1997, p. 7).

One's everyday thoughts and actions, Preston suggests, become shaped by the sense of place one receives from the surrounding culture, which necessarily in today's media-saturated world will include information and ideas from media messages. Media is in itself a "routine social practice" that reflects social and political institutions and values, thereby mirroring and shaping the sense of personal geographic identity that individuals hold (Preston, 1997, p. 10). Finally, as Preston further argues, a feeling of one's "locale" – created through a variety of social and political institutions, including the media – is critical to the formation of personal identity, and therefore to individuals' eventual actions within that community.

In this global and mobile world where most knowledge of one's surroundings comes from the media, the relationship between the individual's sense of place and the media's provision of information is worthy of further analysis in order to tease out its complex connections to the social, political, and economic context. The recognition of the multilayered creation of individuals' sense of place also requires the acknowledgment of the real significance of this sense. As Harvey states, there are true "material consequences" of the particular place constructions in which people and institutions participate (1996, p. 324). The media, among other social institutions, provide a repository of ideas and values which individuals utilize to form their own notion of appropriate participation in that culture and community. Dahlgren refers to this as "civic culture…a storehouse of assets that individuals and groups draw upon and make use of in their activities as citizens" (2003, p. 155). The media critically contribute to this storehouse, thereby shaping the actions of individuals as they respond to their communities' needs in daily life, and also informing their sense of themselves as citizens respective to that community.

However, the media also complicate the individual's project of constructing a personal sense of place or identity. In their contemporary proliferation, the media now offer audiences a huge range of options for consumption, with an entire range of identities made available for sampling and adoption if desired. As Thompson describes it,

> As these mediated experiences are incorporated reflexively into the project of self-formation, the nature of the self is transformed. It is not dissolved or dispersed by media messages, but rather is opened up by them…to influences

> which stem from distant locales…The growing availability of mediated experience thus creates new opportunities, new options, new arenas for self-experimentation…But as our biographies are opened up by mediated experience, we also find ourselves drawn into issues and social relations which extend well beyond the locales of our day-to-day lives…We are thrown into a world of baffling complexity. (1996, p. 233)

Thompson here describes the process that occurs when individuals in one locale are exposed to media messages that inform them and inspire them about life in another locale. In other words, the range of available experience is vastly broadened by the images and information provided by media. At the same time, more than information provision is occurring; the audience selectively determines how they will adopt and personally incorporate – or not – the concepts of identity that are also inherent to these media messages. Thompson's view of this self-determination process is relatively positive. While he notes that this media world is "baffling," he notes that the self is not "dissolved" or destroyed by the consideration of media messages and their suggested identities; instead, the process can be an exciting exploration and experimentation for the audience member who imagines and considers the media information. The media today, therefore, represent to Thompson a significant way that, within contemporary life, "the conditions of self-formation have been altered" (1996, p. 232).

A similar perspective is offered by Appadurai (1996) in his concept of "mediascapes." Appadurai argues that "The landscapes of group identity…around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer

tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogenous" (1996, p. 48). Instead, Appadurai describes a range of ways in which the flows of information and ideas around the world have been altered by globalization, including the notion of the mediascape, one of the five "dimensions of global cultural flows" (1996, p. 33). The mediascape provides a range of visions of the world to its viewers, who utilize the images and information they receive from the global mass media to construct "deeply perspectival" senses of their places and the possibilities for their lives. As Appadurai states,

> …as the deterritorialization of persons, images, and ideas has taken on new force…[m]ore persons throughout the world see their lives through the prisms of the possible lives offered by the mass media in all their forms. That is, fantasy is now a social practice; it enters, in a host of ways, into the fabrication of social lives for many people in many societies. (1996, p. 54)

Thompson and Appadurai both indicate the fluid nature of personal geographic identity in today's mediated world. Individuals can draw upon multiple media sources to inform and construct a highly "perspectival" and unique sense of place that may even unite numerous, far-flung places into their own geographic sense. It is these media sources, though, that both Thompson and Appadurai see as fundamental to this process of self-formation and self-understanding with regard to place. In a global and mobile world, media messages increase a sort of virtual mobility even further, via the imagination of media audiences and their capacity to envision how they might personally fit into the full range of places visible in the media.

Some of the contemporary studies of this phenomenon – the formation of individual sense of place via the media – have occurred among immigrants, who today may use a range of media to stay in touch with their homelands and families. These media especially include global broadcasting and the Internet. Some of this research has considered how immigrant communities in the United States have used mass media to maintain language and cultural customs despite their relatively small populations. Modarresi (2001) notes that Iranian immigrants to the U.S., for example, have been able to continue their use of the Persian language partly due to the availability of Persian-language print media (including around 50 periodicals and numerous books) and broadcasting (such as around 20 television shows). She notes that radio and television programs in Persian are especially useful in encouraging second-generation Iranian-Americans to learn and maintain their use of Persian (Modarresi, 2001). The perpetuation of one's own language, then, can contribute to participation in an imagined community of immigrants.

The Internet has provided a new realm of additional media in every language for people to access as well. The Internet has been described by many scholars as creating an "in-between space" (Shi, 2005, p. 56) for immigrants to interact and retain contact with their homelands. Shi discusses the use of the Internet by Chinese diaspora members in the U.S., who find "collective diasporic imaginations" in their use of Chinese online media, such as news Web sites (2005, p. 57). Similarly, Adams and Ghose (2003) analyze the "bridgespace" created by and through Internet Web sites for Indian migrants to the U.S. They describe this bridgespace as "a collection of interconnected virtual places that

support people's movement between two regions or countries and the sustenance of social ties at a distance" (Adams & Ghose, 2003, p. 419). By visiting and interacting with these virtual places – and the other immigrants and Indian residents who also utilize them – Indians may gain and maintain a sense of imagined community. Therefore, these media permit the maintenance and expansion of individual identity to include both components of the individual's immediate location and his or her past locations and geographic identity.

One particularly relevant examination of a magazine's ability to construct wide-ranging imagined communities is provided by Machin and van Leeuwen (2003). Their analysis of the variety of global editions of *Cosmopolitan* magazine focuses on the "problem-solution" discourse schema used in the magazine. They found that this schema formed the foundation for stories on many diverse topics – regardless whether the particular story was produced for the Dutch, Greek, American or Taiwanese edition of the magazine. The researchers attributed this schema's frequency to the tendency of global neo-capitalism to characterize even "social practices and goal-oriented and strategic, even in matters of the emotions, e.g., anger, or love" (Machin & van Leeuwen, 2003, p. 509). This characterization then supports the hegemony of particular social institutions that – for example – might retail products to support women's strategic courtship of men as they attempt to attain the ideals of airbrushed beauty. Therefore, *Cosmopolitan* helps construct of a worldwide community of readers for whom femininity is performed through strategic acts of acquisition, dress, and even personal grooming in the global neo-capitalist world. This example also illustrates how the marketing of a

magazine – and the precise nature of its editorial content – may interact with powerful economic forces over a large geographical scale, and how the identities the magazine promotes may reinforce hegemonic social institutions.

Machin and van Leeuwen's analysis points toward the true complexity of analyzing media's geographic significance alongside the ways media messages reflect and shape values, social practices, and individual identity. Their study incorporated not just a sensitivity to the specific places in which media messages were produced and consumed, but also an acknowledgment of their real economic and ideological context. This type of wide-ranging perspective provides a model for this study of *Texas Monthly*, which necessarily must consider not only the audience's participation in an imagined community of readers – both within and outside Texas – but also the ideology and power relations involved in the construction of place in the magazine. As this construction will certainly reflect existing social and political beliefs about Texas as a place, it will affect the ways in which the audience may incorporate these concepts into their own personal identities. And by focusing specifically on Texas alone and suggesting Texas possesses a unique value, some individuals and ideas will necessarily be excluded. Ehrkamp notes that the media (as a powerful social and cultural institution) "assume the authority to label, categorize, and thereby create the 'other' – usually as inferior to them, thereby asserting and exercising power over the 'other'…and consolidating the symbolic dominance of the majority" (2006, p. 1677). Media audiences may examine these constructions carefully, and thereby "internalize, grapple with, and often contest and

challenge such labels and ascriptions" (Ehrkamp, 2006, p. 1676). However, the dominant images and ideologies persist and continue to retain their power.

The processes by which *Texas Monthly* arrives at the "labels" and "categories" of Texan/"other," then, deserve further attention. They represent a fundamental way in which information and ideas about the nature of these two groups are propagated among the magazine's audience. Scrutiny of the range of forces underlying the formation of these categories may reveal much about the role of contemporary journalism in providing information for individuals as they seek to utilize the media as that "storehouse" of resources that shapes their everyday lives and personal identities.

It is clear that the media construction of a place – in this case, Texas – is selective in nature. Not everything can be included in such a representation, and so, as described above, someone must decide what will be left out and defined as unnecessary or unworthy of inclusion. The nature of media products as mere representations of reality – not exhaustive and fully complete replications, even if some single "reality" exists – prevents them from communicating every possible iteration of "reality" to their audiences. This construction or "mediation" of reality by the media is constrained in numerous ways – ranging from the impact of dominant ideology, to media organizations' nature as (mostly) corporations, to the effects of individual journalists' everyday decisions. As McQuail describes,

> Given this diversity of underlying motivation in the selection and flow of the 'images of reality,' we can see that mediation is unlikely to be a purely neutral

> process. The 'reality' will always be to some extent selected and constructed and there will be certain consistent biases. (2000, p. 67)

Some analyses of the specific biases that might underlie media constructions of places have been conducted upon entertainment media, though fewer have been undertaken upon journalistic products.

For example, Voss (1999) analyzes the "mediated city" of Los Angeles as portrayed in a variety of movies. Voss concludes that the cinematic presentation of Los Angeles in the films she analyzes ultimately reinforces "a certain demographic of privilege" (1999, p. 341), particularly white American males; this reinforcement responds to a purportedly perceived threat to this group's superiority from other races and from the investment of foreign capital, specifically Japanese, on the West Coast. Furthermore, because these movies construct a limited "sense of place" for Los Angeles within their content, the audience is left with little idea of how to understand or to remedy the actual divisions and conflict among the groups within this place. Voss's analysis of these films demonstrates how media texts might – while ostensibly just using a place as a physical setting – also imply much more about the relative power and concerns of people in that place.

Journalism's power to help construct a "sense of place" has been much less thoroughly studied, though some researchers have certainly considered these issues. In particular, Kaniss's study (1991) of local news production across multiple media. Kaniss studied the economic considerations and journalistic routines of local news producers, and her conclusions carry echoes of Park and Carey. She argues that any localized news

producer must ultimately create a coherent audience that can then be made available to advertisers. This coherence is created by "draw[ing] that market of dispersed and diverse readers together into a common local identity" through stories with "the symbolic value capable of binding together the local audience" (Kaniss, 1991, p. 59). In other words, despite all the factors weighed during the creation of journalism, local news producers must primarily consider how a particular story or issue might connect with their audience's "sense of place" – their feeling of belonging to that local community and bonding with it.

Kaniss finds this factor at the core of local news production, and it is a consideration that supports not only audience growth, but also advertisers' and media owners' interests. The symbolic power of the local identity presented in the local news goes far beyond a mere commercial appeal, and is also a strong appeal to a sense of place. These local news producers, one might argue, also assert a special authority over knowledge of their places. Including the name of the place in the title of a newspaper or magazine visibly projects a claim to knowledge about that place; it is not about any other place, but fully and thoroughly about one in particular, and will aid its audience in learning more about that specific location.

Magazines, in particular, invite readers into a conversation and a more personal relationship, thanks to their unique language and tone, and thereby increase their sense of authority in defining the community that they share with readers (Kitch, 2005, p. 9). Magazines' ability to construct imagined communities around a specific constructed identity or a particular subject matter has been noted by numerous researchers as well. As

Johnson and Prijatel (1999, p. 89) describe, some magazines – including *Commentary*, *Tikkun*, and *Utne Reader* – have assisted their readers in creating in-person, real-world discussion groups.

However, magazines create opportunities for discussion and self-definition in their pages as well. Frau-Meigs (2000) explains how *Wired* magazine, during the early days of the Internet, presented an optimistic and even mildly revolutionary perspective on evolving technologies, even as other media outlets expressed hesitancy about their possibilities. Most relevant for the question of "micro public spheres," *Wired* coined the term "netizens" to refer to its readers, who were "citizens of the Internet" (Frau-Meigs, 2000, p. 239). The content of *Wired* urged readers to view the political version of the public sphere as outdated and even suspect, whereas technology would allow a positive anarchy and freedom to emerge. This political philosophy, expressed fairly obviously within the magazine, created a "claim to virtual identity" and all its rights and opportunities, and entailed readers' loyalty to other causes – like deregulation – that would allow the full realization of this identity (Frau-Meigs, 2000).

On the other end of the technological spectrum, Scanlon (2004) describes how from 1918 to 1919, *Ladies' Home Journal* attempted to provoke a public discussion of whether women should be freed from household labor to obtain positions in the workforce. Homes could then be made "kitchenless" and domestic tasks reassigned to community housekeeping arrangements, where these chores would be shared among families or "outsourced" to paid services. Scanlon notes, however, that the possibilities of such arrangements fell victim to the increasing attractions of individual consumerism:

"Middle-class women may have desired more autonomy outside the home, but their concurrent, growing desire for consumer goods did not bode well for efforts to shift the focus away from the kitchen, a primary site for consumer display" (Scanlon, 2004, p. 7). With an increased emphasis on home decoration – combined with the connection of community housekeeping to communism following World War I – this movement largely met its end by the late 1920s. The imagined community of female readers, then, were offered a constrained "definition of womanhood that included full participation in consumer culture and a limited embrace of modern womanhood, a means to see themselves as both 'wasp-waisted women' and more efficient housekeepers" (Scanlon, 2004, p. 8).

Magazines' ability to construct these imagined communities, then, is partly dependent on constructions of place – here, the Internet, or the American home as inhabited by the modern middle-class housewife. Both of these constructions, however, as described by Frau-Meigs and Scanlon, contain assumptions about class as related to the appropriate identities for magazine readers to adopt within those places. Clearly, Wired readers with the opportunity to engage in the communication technologies described in the magazine must have been of a relatively high socioeconomic status; likewise, the *Ladies' Home Journal* readers who could afford the outsourcing of dinner and vacuuming would need to possess a certain level of resources for community housekeeping even to be an option.

Critically, then, economics and consumerism have shaped the ways in which magazines have worked to create imagined communities of subscribers to their suggested

identities. An analysis of *Esquire* by Breazeale (1994) suggests a similar perspective; he argues that over the years, *Esquire* has constructed male consumers primarily in opposition to negative stereotypes of female consumers, for whom shopping is allegedly a taste-free luxurious pastime, executed incompetently. Men, on the other hand, were told by *Esquire* that they could utilize their higher masculine reason to make better consumption decisions. Breazeale argues that specialized magazines can become a "calculated packages of meaning whose aim is to transform the reader into an imaginary subject – as Louis Althusser put it, to 'appellate each reader'" (1994, p. 9). These readers are then intended to act, and especially consume products, in ways that embody their appellation.

Drawing upon Breazeale's argument, Sender (2001) utilizes Bourdieu's idea of habitus to suggest that *The Advocate* magazine, which is aimed at a gay and lesbian audience, provides information for this group on the appropriate ways to enact what might be called a gay appellation. Like *Texas Monthly*, *The Advocate* has undergone significant change over time, including multiple redesigns and changes in ownership. Sender argues that with these changes, *The Advocate* has shifted from a more political and adversarial perspective to one that represents gay individuals primarily as private individuals and consumers. This shift, Sender argues, has helped create and reinforce a larger stereotype of gay men as "wealthy, free-spending, [and] trend-setting," which is then acted out by readers (to some degree) and by the magazine's corporate sponsors (2001, p. 85). A very similar argument is made by Theberge (1991), who discusses how 1980s musicians' magazines both presented musicians to each other as a means of

creating community, but also offered them as a ready market to potential music industry advertisers.

Notably, then, numerous magazines have endeavored to create communities of readers who identify with a specific self-concept (gay, musician, housewife, netizen, etc.), but have encoded the enactment of these readers' adopted identities in signs of class and consumerism. These magazines connect with readers emotionally by providing them a dialogic voice, as Kitch describes, and provide them with a sense of belonging to a larger community. These are powerful methods of engaging people by helping them feel part of a group organized around an identity or activity. However, as Dahlgren describes, these types of capitalist, advertising-funded media messages have also engaged

> consumerism as an ideological vector…While the role of the citizen has become increasingly intertwined with that of the consumer in late modern society and the two can no longer be seen as directly antithetical, the discursive modes of consumerism accentuate market relations and individual satisfaction, rather than democratic principles and such values as justice, equality, and solidarity. (2003, p. 161)

Therefore, the economic foundation of the identities presented by these magazines cannot be ignored. A critical component of their analysis must be the ways in which this consumerist attitude might permeate their content and the types of action and self-formation that are suggested for their audiences. The "storehouse" of ideas and information available in the "imaginary" for a personal sense of place may be constrained or altered by the fundamentally consumerist perspective offered in these media.

Likewise, this consumerist approach to representing identity and place in media may have actual political consequences. If, as discussed above, a place is truly a complex political and social construction beyond a mere physical reality, then a journalistic representation of a place simply adds further layers of complexity, as journalists select and highlight various elements of a place, and provide ideas for audiences about their individual identities and potential for action within that place. Some previous research has explored the ways that representations of places in journalism have reflected and/or shaped political processes and outcomes.

For example, Larsen and Brock (2005) discuss how imagery of the Great Basin of Nevada has been presented in newspaper coverage of proposals to establish a nuclear waste dump at Yucca Mountain. The imagery of this region has largely constructed it as a barren and desolate area, thus justifying its usage as a dump. This construction, according to the authors, draws upon Cold War-era imagery of this region, which serves as "shorthand" to expedite story production for journalists without the ability, time, or desire to explore the nuances of the region firsthand. The authors argue that this limited construction of the Great Basin is a disservice to the audience for journalism, and they call upon journalism to "interrogate prevailing cultural geographical assumptions…[and] recognize alternative expressions in the pursuit of critical and balanced coverage of peoples and places" (Larsen & Brock, 2005, p. 535). In this case, journalism's limited construction of a place prevented full consideration of the many facets of this serious issue. The construction of this place was restricted by the nature of contemporary

journalism, in which the profit motive may at times supersede the ability of journalists to report in depth and creatively upon significant issues.

Imagining Texas and Texan Identity: Historical Complications

A place is inextricably connected to its history for the people who experience that location. The memory of what has occurred in that place, carried down through the generations through monuments and education, inevitably will also shape the identity of those people. The identity adopted by these individuals is strongly related to their place and their knowledge of how its physical reality has shaped their ancestors' and their own lives (Harvey, 1996, p. 304). Part of this knowledge is carried through the stories that are told and retold about that place. As Preston describes, these "narratives of collectivity" are critical to the formation of a political and cultural identity for a group of people; these are the stories that are repeated to reinforce the self-concept of these individuals in some fundamental way (1997, p. 72).

These "narratives of collectivity" based upon a shared imagination of a place resemble what Sorlin calls a "landscape myth" (1999, p. 104). The physical nature of a place has a great deal to do with the development of its people's identity and social memories, both within and without that place. The repetition of and assignation of value to some landscapes and not others can say a great deal about the values of that region or nation. As Sorlin says,

> People belong to nations and provinces and towns and villages, to a large extent because of that acquired sense of having been connected to place and

> memory…[W]hat people in these countries or regions have in common is a shared set of 'givens,' historically and geographically. They have probably learned the characteristics of their territory and…had them imprinted in their minds because there has been a long process of imprinting, partly organic and spontaneous, partly conscious, in some instances even with elements of manipulation. (1999, p. 109)

Today, in this era of decreased physical contact with our tangible landscapes, a significant part of this learning of territorial "givens" is via the mass media. While mass media are probably not often deliberately "manipulative," their selective nature, as discussed above, may amount to the transmission and audience adoption of a limited set of geographical "givens." Therefore, the "social remembering" (Sorlin, 1999, p. 109) of the physical nature of Texas may be affected by the perceived desirability (and, probably, marketability) of particular aspects of the Texas landscape.

This social remembering may result in negative "material consequences" resulting from a specific construction of a place, as Harvey noted above. The selectivity of memory and its media (mis)representation may overemphasize some components of a place's reality and direct excessive media and political attention to one issue over another which is actually more deserving of attention. For example, in the case of Texas, this selectivity may overemphasize the agricultural aspects of Texas – especially the romanticized image of the Texas rancher, working cattle and riding herd – disproportionately to, say, the realities and desperation of life in the border colonias. This representation may have amplified unjustly the perceived significance of farming and

ranching as uses of land in Texas. Although media and political discussions of Texas' economy and population often focus on agribusiness, this representation may distort the actual interaction of Texans with their land; Texas is fact one of the most urbanized states in the U.S., and only a tiny portion of the state's population is actually involved in farming or ranching (Calvert, 1991). Frequent media portrayals of Texans as involved with either cows or cotton might skew political attention toward those issues, to the neglect of urban issues that affect greater portions of the population.

But the image and activities of the rugged Texan rancher and cowboy compose exactly one of those "narratives of collectivity" that Preston finds critical to forming political and cultural identity for a group and individuals within it. The personality type thought to represented by these iconic professions has its basis in Texas history, especially within its onetime existence as a distinct and independent nation from 1836 to 1845.

Adams (2004) has located evidence for a similar nationalistic self-assertion within the media of Quebec following the attacks on New York on September 11, 2001, and has drawn from that study a description of the processes by which that geographic assertion is established in media discourse. His analysis of news stories and letters to the editor published in Quebec newspapers following the attacks found that the Quebec media tended to create a contrast between Quebec itself as a "small nation" and the U.S. as a major, hegemonic global power. Particularly useful for this study, Adams also proposes major elements of "geopolitical codes," or qualities of nationalistic place-related

expression. While Adams provides five such elements, the three most relevant to this study include:

> first, historicity, as embodied in how a national culture constructs places outside the nation as embodiments of the past or future…[second,] peak experiences that are grist in the mill of nationalistic myth-making: such as the Alamo, the battle of Gettysburg, or the landing at Plymouth Rock, for Americans…[and, third] territoriality…insofar as some expressions of nationalism express the areal extent of the nation and others emphasize placeless traits like ethnicity, language, or political culture…. (2004, p. 772)

While one might object that Texas is not a nation, and therefore these qualities of nationalistic speech or text might not apply, Texan media, including *Texas Monthly*, do indeed continue to construct the state as its own nation.

The brief period of history in which Texas was in fact the Republic of Texas is glorified as a time of independence and self-determination (without federal government interference) by many Texans. This vision is included in accounts of Texas history taught in Texas schools, which require a seventh-grade course in Texas history. This characterization is exemplified in a passage from a 1969 scholarly book titled *Imperial Texas*, though as a whole the text has a much more critical air than one finds in seventh-grade accounts:

> [I]n the twenty-five years since independence…Texans had strongly asserted and the nation had in some degree readily accepted the idea of Texas as a highly individual place and Texans as a distinctive people. The seeds of its caricature

> were already in vigorous growth. Triumph in war over a much larger nation, a decade of independence recognized by the leading powers of the world, statehood on its own terms, and all these within a setting huge and promising sustained a strong sense of power and individuality. (Meinig, 1969, p. 62)

Second – clearly playing off this cultural understanding and common identity, even inculcated into Texans through education – an award-winning, widely distributed tourism campaign for Texas used the slogan: "Texas. It's Like a Whole Other Country" (Office of the Texas Governor, 2006). Through this campaign, the Texas-as-nation trope was carried outside the state's borders into the global media, and thereby further perpetuated.

Given this ongoing celebration of Texas's supposed nationhood, and the real historical elements behind it, Adams' criteria for geopolitical codes make sense in the Texas context. Certainly *Texas Monthly* consistently refers back to those "peak experiences" of Texas' past, such as the Alamo, and also constructs Texan culture as significant and distinct. However, as Adams argued about the comparisons he found in news coverage between Quebec and the U.S., the distinctions made between "Us and Them" are fluid, but also "deeply embedded in culture" (2004, p. 773). Texans, likewise, may at times adopt a patriotic American image as desired, reflecting their support of the nation as a whole; but the distinctiveness offered to them as individuals and as a state by claiming the "nation" status is too tempting to avoid. The self-image and attribution of strength and uniqueness provided by this status is repeated throughout Texan media and other cultural elements.

Texan identity is also perpetuated through its physical places and the provision of consumer goods that are suggested to be "Texan." An analysis specifically of Texas' borderlands from this perspective, though not in the media context, is provided by de Oliver and Yoder (2000). As these authors note,

> Political and cultural borderlands are excellent places to see the struggle to (re)affirm identity because the immediate presence of contrasting cultural traditions promotes insecurity by representing a functional alternative to a group's own practices and perspectives….[This] results in heightened expressions of identity that define 'us' and 'them.' (de Oliver & Yoder, 2000, p. 89)

De Oliver and Yoder analyze physical features in the cities of San Antonio and Laredo, and emphasize the ways in which the cities' layout and consumer offerings particularly encourage citizens to express their individual and ethnic identities through the purchase of symbolic material items. For example, the purchase of cars and the resulting emphasis on car-friendly city design are ways in which increasing consumerism as self-expression in these borderlands has shaped the physical landscape. Given the market-based nature of these expressions, de Oliver and Yoder argue that the South Texas borderlands demonstrate "the postmodern emphasis placed on commodified cultural symbols of 'others' as opposed to 'others' themselves" (2000, p. 105).

This availability of commodified symbols that reify otherness is also relevant to *Texas Monthly*. De Oliver and Yoder write: "As opposed to a simple road map, a tour through the borderlands requires a consumer guide if a contemporary multicultural experience is to be had" (2000, p. 106). In a startling similarity, *Texas Monthly*, which

represents those multicultural borderlands in its pages, calls itself “part textbook and part guidebook, a journalistic road map of the state, its history, and its people” ("About the magazine," 2006), and thus purports to provide just that consumer guide to the various cultures within Texas. That guide comes complete with advertising for “Texan” products. Texas identity and borderland identity are thus now “fluid concept[s] constructed from a palette of commodified cultural attributes acquirable through purchase” (de Oliver & Yoder, 2000, p. 106). Therefore, media representations allow audiences to better understand how to construct their various identities, selected from among the possibilities envisioned by Thompson, inherent to Appadurai’s mediascape. The process of self-formation may now include, for many, the construction of a sense of place from these types of commercial media messages, as well as its enactment in daily life through the purchase of specific products purported to represent that geographic identity.

As de Oliver and Yoder’s analysis suggests, Texas today is highly diverse, and the question of diversity in media representations is always a prominent and significant one. Media scholars have consistently noted a tendency to feature white people of higher socioeconomic status in the news, and have also argued that the most frequent representations of nonwhite individuals are portrayals of them as criminals or otherwise deviant from the “norms” of mainstream society (Wilson & Gutierrez, 1995). In Texas, media products face the challenge of representing all the groups that reside within this newly “minority majority” state.

History scholars have noted that narratives of Texas history have largely addressed those “peak experiences” described by Adams, such as the Alamo, and tend to

focus on the notion of Texas's special ethos as defined through those events. Accounts of those events often exclude portrayals of nonwhite racial and ethnic groups and of women, despite their important roles in Texas' past. As Davis states,

> So long as writers persist in viewing the Texas experience as grandiosely unique, any examination of the state's cultural heritage is bound to be limited…. Observers must first come to terms with the reality of twentieth-century Texas, with its ethnic diversity, and should recognize that much of the state's recent cultural life has been shaped by international standards. (1991, p. 17)

Given this recognition of the multiple forces that today shape Texas identity from beyond its legally defined borders, stories of the full range of contributions to "Texas" have yet to be told. The edited volume that includes Davis' commentary includes accounts of what some might call "revisionist" Texas history, focusing on the backgrounds, achievements, and contemporary situations of various ethnic groups and of women, all groups that are often omitted from tales of Texas' past and present (Buenger & Calvert, 1991). In the meantime, a former *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* reporter, writing in a volume for the 125th anniversary of the Texas Press Association, notes that Texas journalism has the opportunity can continue "forging the continuum of community newspapering and Texas history while burnishing the Texas persona along the way. The way we were. The way we are" (Blackman, 2005, p. 45). Davis and Blackman's statements imply that there is a "Texas experience" and a "Texas persona," singularities that in today's diverse Texas seem increasingly problematic; after all, who is the "we" who possess Blackman's idealized Texas persona? The construction of the Texas identity – again, partly due to

media portrayals of it, as in *Texas Monthly* – may likewise fail to allow room for the diverse range of people included in the space of Texas.

In his analysis of the traditions surrounding the British monarchy, Thompson describes the ways in which the royals have modified their ceremonies to incorporate the rise of broadcasting and other mass media. For example, the televised coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953, he argues, was the first time that the mass public was able to witness a ceremony of such significance within the nation, thereby opening the celebration to the population beyond the powerful "metropolitan elites" (Thompson, 1996, p. 201). The net result of this gradual incorporation of media into the monarchy's public presence, Thompson asserts, has resulted in a hybridization of "authentic" or "original" symbolic acts with "mediated" symbolic acts, which are not in his view less valuable, but merely different: "traditions have become increasingly dependent on mediated symbolic forms; they have become dislodged from particular locales and re-embedded in social life in new ways" (1996, p. 202). Likewise, in the case of the "cultural centrifuge" that is Texas (de la Teja, Marks, & Tyler, 2004, p. xiii), the "narratives of collectivity" and "landscape myths" that provide a sense of place and geographic tradition for Texans and others have become embedded in media messages, which themselves may transform the narratives and ideas presented, particularly because of their commercial structure. Whereas the stories told of Texas and the identity presented for Texans might have been widely told and commonly accepted in a pre-media, more homogenous past, the rise of media has complicated the types of stories available to the public, as well as making their salability all the more critical.

When choosing topics to cover in their pages, regional magazines also have the opportunity to present not only the current events happening in their places today, but can also delve into the past in ways that newspapers cannot often accommodate. Places both create and hold human memories in significant ways; as Casey describes, "Place is the generatrix for the collection, as well as the recollection, of all that occurs in the lives of sentient beings…Its power consists in gathering these lives and things, each with its own space and time, into one arena of common engagement" (1996, p. 26). *Texas Monthly*, as a magazine that can include accounts of both the present and the past, is uniquely positioned as a media text that can also collect and represent some memories of Texas for its audience.

Newspapers have on occasion had the opportunity to present Texas' past, notably around the Texas Centennial in 1936. Cox discusses the ways newspapers were able to reform and reinterpret the prior hundred years of Texas history through their reportage, in ways that would resonate until today:

> For the future of the state, the era transcended the collective memory of the era into a new dimension and interpretation of regional history. "Texanism," the rise of Texas heritage and identification, assumed a new mantle of importance. The beliefs, symbols, stories, language, images, and physical structures that encompassed this new public memory originated in this centennial era (2005, p. 16).

Newspapers helped create, through editorials and civic events, the push for large-scale centennial celebrations, which they then enthusiastically covered in their own pages,

especially in collectible "centennial editions" (Cox, 2005, p. 18). Though the centennial provided a "news hook" that permitted newspapers to provide this extensive coverage of the past and to frame the future in certain terms, they do not typically have these opportunities, given their focus on the day's events. Magazines, though, can range forward and back in time – in the history of their place – as much as desired. Potentially, they too might have effects on the nature of public memory with regard to a place, and in Texas have a special opportunity to engage that "Texanism" to which Cox refers.

Representations of the past are certainly one concern with regard to *Texas Monthly* and other specialized geographic media, suggesting – as Adams describes – the definitive "peak experiences" that continue to structure the reality of that place to the present day. However, Texas and *Texas Monthly* represent a fascinating case for an additional reason, which is that they may also represent the future of place-based media. Texas, with its rapidly diversifying population and its apparent desire to retain a distinctive identity as a unique place, provides an opportunity for witnessing firsthand the ways that commercial media will address the confluence of these concerns. As the rest of the U.S. faces the challenges of an increasingly multicultural population, and other countries address similar situations, it is worth examining how media will incorporate the needs and desires of these populations. Commercial media, with their need to gain profit while satisfying journalistic norms, evidently will need to find ways to retain their base of readers who still engage in the classic "narratives of collectivity," while also reaching out to new readers and markets for whom these narratives do not ring entirely true. The constructions of place provided in these media will have to adjust to the changing market

and social realities. An examination of *Texas Monthly* can present insight into how contemporary media organizations will deal with these conditions, now and in the future.

The History of *Texas Monthly* and Its Transition to Corporate Ownership

As stated above, *Texas Monthly* need not abide by the traditional news values, like those identified by basic journalism textbooks: timeliness, proximity, conflict, human interest, and so forth. Instead, the magazine must develop its own set of unique criteria to determine which stories will be selected for inclusion in the magazine, and from what angle they will be covered. As William Broyles, the first editor of the magazine, wrote in 1978, "Since we are a monthly magazine, we can't cover the news as a newspaper does. But we can parallel the news, poke around in it, and try to figure out what it means" (1978, p. 12). The specific criteria for pursuing these stories are not explicitly revealed to the audience, but can be assumed to include some combination of journalistic and commercial values, given that *Texas Monthly* is also sold as a product to generate profit.

This commercial aspect of the magazine also necessitates greater attention, and should be placed in context with its history. *Texas Monthly* was founded in 1972 by Michael Levy, who had recently graduated from law school at the University of Texas at Austin, and who recruited his friend William Broyles to serve as the magazine's first editor (Broyles, 1978, p. 9). In 1978, Broyles described the vision of the magazine and explained its sense of Texas:

> …Texans were in fact united by something indefinable yet powerful: being Texan….Even as the legendary Texans…disappeared into the reality of an

> increasingly urban Texas, so being Texan became more and more a state of mind. In an America homogenized by mass media and a restless, mobile society, Texas stood for something separate and permanent…Texans would buy a magazine that explored Texas honestly, not as it wanted to be but in the full splendor of what it was, warts and all. Levy felt Texas was both ready to be taken seriously and confident enough to laugh at itself. (1978, p. 10)

Clearly, the magazine's founding publisher and editor recognized the power of Texan identity to unify the public and gain the magazine a loyal readership. They also devised a sense of Texas in these early years of the magazine that would attempt to include both positive and negative components of the state's nature. Also in 1978, the foreword to a book-length collection of the magazine's political coverage cited Broyles' statement in the inaugural issue that "While we are not a magazine of politics, we will not ignore the rich political life of our state. We will try to get behind the people and institutions that are shaping its political, commercial, and physical environment and explain why it is and how it got that way" (*Texas Monthly's political reader*, 1978, p. 7).

Following this formula, the magazine quickly obtained significant success. In 1974, after only one year of publication, the magazine received a National Magazine Award for Specialized Journalism, and in its first three years, its circulation grew from 20,000 to almost 200,000 (Southwestern Writers Collection, 2008). In 1981, Gregory Curtis, who had been on staff at the magazine for some time, took over the editorship from Broyles, and by 1988, the magazine sold about $23 million worth of advertising each year and reached over 300,000 readers with each issue (Southwestern Writers

Collection, 2008). During the 1990s, it won more National Magazine Awards, including an award for General Excellence (Texas Monthly, 2007b). Throughout this period, the magazine was owned by Mediatex, a company primarily held by Levy, the magazine's founder (Southwestern Writers Collection, 2008).

A major change in direction for the magazine came in 1998, when Levy sold the magazine to Emmis Communications, a larger media conglomerate based in Indianapolis. According to the Emmis Web site, the company "owns and operates radio, television, and magazine entities in large and medium sized markets throughout the U.S. Emmis is the 9th largest radio group in the U.S. (based on listeners)" (Emmis Communications, 2007a). Emmis has been a publicly held corporation since 1994, and in addition to its holdings in the U.S., also owns radio stations in Hungary and Argentina (Emmis Communications, 2007d). Furthermore, *Texas Monthly* is only one of the city/regional magazines owned by Emmis. The company also owns the magazines *Indianapolis Monthly*, *Cincinnati*, *Atlanta*, *Orange Coast*, *Los Angeles*, and *Tu Ciudad* (in Los Angeles) (Emmis Communications, 2007d).

Emmis sees itself as an innovative and vibrant organization, according to its description on its corporate Web site: "Aggressive, knowledgeable, and deeply committed to each of the communities in which it operates, Emmis…[has] a company philosophy of encouraging creativity and new approaches" (Emmis Communications, 2007a). With regard to its magazines, additionally, Emmis calls itself "the country's leading publisher of city and regional magazines" (Emmis Communications, 2007b), and states that it produces "award-winning regional and specialty magazines" (Emmis

Communications, 2007d). *Texas Monthly* is the centerpiece of the company's magazine publishing division, and is described by Emmis as both "reporting on vital issues" and as a "leisure guide," and as "above all…a magazine of the highest editorial quality" (Emmis Communications, 2007c). Clearly, *Texas Monthly* is a major component of Emmis's magazine business.

However, the consequences of the Emmis acquisition for the magazine have been varied. One major alteration occurred in 2000, when Gregory Curtis stepped down from the editorship and was replaced by Evan Smith. Smith had held various roles at *Texas Monthly* beginning in 1991, but left in February 1994 to work as deputy editor of *The New Republic*; he then returned only seven months later to his position as deputy editor of *Texas Monthly*, and became editor-in-chief in July 2000 (Texas Monthly, 2000). From 1998 to 2000, Smith had also served as editor of special projects for the magazine, meaning that he was "in charge of all *Texas Monthly* brand extensions" (Texas Monthly, 2000). These "brand extensions" include projects such as the special shopping issues created for individual Texas cities.

A change in editorial leadership could clearly have consequences for the magazine's content. In an August 2000 letter from the editor, though, Smith reassured the audience that the magazine would retain its most significant qualities, though it would also "evolve" over time in accordance with its commitment to three principles:

> *We are about journalism*….most magazines have retreated from publishing long-form narrative and investigative stories…The result is that every issue of every magazine looks and feels just like every issue of every other magazine….we'll

> start [running longer stories] again…*Our content is not for sale*….At *Texas Monthly*, we take seriously the idea that our story selection and direction should be independent from any business considerations…*You are our constituency*….we're always aware that we're here for you and because of you, and that knowledge will inform every decision we make. (p. 10)

In this letter, Smith sought to reassure readers that despite the major leadership shift, the magazine would continue to provide unique and quality journalism, produced according to ethical standards and responsive to readers' needs and requests.

Interestingly, Smith addresses here not only his own readers' potential concerns regarding the future of their subscriptions, but also some of the concerns about the consolidation of magazine ownership that have been expressed by analysts of magazine journalism. During 2005, the top three magazine companies – Time Warner, Advance Publications, and Hearst – had combined magazine revenues of about $9.5 billion (Project for Excellence in Journalism, 2008). Time Warner's Time, Inc., division alone owns 125 magazines, in addition to its other multimedia holdings (Time Warner, 2008). Magazines have been subject to the same process of concentration of ownership that has affected newspapers, among other types of media products. During this process, many independent local and regional publications have been purchased by larger and often geographically distant corporations. These media conglomerates may be less interested in the life within places addressed by these publications than in their profit potential.

Journalism critics have attributed numerous worrisome characteristics of contemporary journalism to this concentration of ownership. Their major concerns

regarding the media produced by these powerful companies include the reduction of resources allocated to journalism production in order to increase profits; an overall homogenization of media messages once the number of owners and producers is decreased; and an ideological narrowness, particularly a favorable representation of capitalist and consumerist attitudes, that may typify these companies' products (Bagdikian, 2004). In the case of *Texas Monthly*, Smith's editorial following his attainment of the editorship renews the magazine's commitment to long-form, investigative journalism, which is more expensive to produce, and also reasserts the desire of the magazine to remain unique and distinctive as an expression of Texas.

Smith also asserts *Texas Monthly*'s editorial independence from advertisers' influence. Magazines may struggle to retain editorial sovereignty, should their corporate owners seek to maximize profit by subtly aligning editorial content with advertisers' goals, a process that would be more difficult to accomplish in a publication that had to present news according to the "news values" described above. McChesney reports that large magazine companies often now provide in-house "corporate marketing departments" to aid advertisers in matching their advertising messages to the audience and content of the magazine; furthermore, advertisers may seek out magazines will provide positive editorial coverage of their products, despite the traditional separation of editorial and advertising content (1999, p. 57). The success of magazines, then, may be seen by corporate owners as dependent upon the suitability of their editorial content to advertisers' desires and goals, and therefore upon their sheer profitability – rather than

measured by the attainment of any higher ideals of journalism, nor by satisfaction of a diverse audience's need for quality information.

Greenberg (2000) points out the special appeal of city magazines to corporate magazine conglomerates, due to their typically affluent audiences. This appeal, she argues, has led to numerous takeovers in this segment of the magazine industry. Greenberg analyzes *Atlanta Magazine*, *Los Angeles Magazine*, and *New York Magazine*; *Atlanta* and *Los Angeles* were acquired by Emmis in 1993 and 2000 respectively (Atlanta Magazine, 2008; Write News.com, 2000), but Greenberg's analysis primarily addresses their content prior to their acquisition by Emmis. These three city magazines have all been owned at various times by major media conglomerates, including the Walt Disney Company and News Corporation. These corporate publishers, Greenberg argues, utilize a "formula" of "toned down and reduced editorial content, increased pages of advertising and lifestyle reporting, new "special sections" filled with consumer reports, and encyclopedic high-end listing sections at the back" (2000, p. 251). Greenberg notes that the distinction between editorial and advertising content was blurred, and even the unique nature of Atlanta, New York, and Los Angeles as distinct, individual cities failed to come across in their homogenized magazines. Instead, the magazines became more oriented toward the needs of the audience in their role as *consumers* in these locations (Greenberg, 2000, p. 252).

Furthermore, according to Greenberg, when these revamped city magazines did take on social and political issues, they did so in ways that addressed white, middle-class concerns, and presented stories in "limited and one-sided" ways (2000, p. 253). Overall,

Greenberg argues, these magazines' content shifted once under corporate control to represent their places in commodified ways: as geographic locations where products and services were available, rather than as unique places faced with political and social needs. This representation coincidentally best served the magazines' owners, advertisers, and the economic goals of the places themselves, by promoting engagement in business, tourism, and consumerism over complex democratic concerns. Greenberg describes this process as the "merging" of the corporate and place "imaginaries"; the result of this process was that a place became a "brand" to be utilized for marketing purposes, rather than a distinctive location of concern to its citizens (Greenberg, 2000, p. 255).

The need of businesses to utilize a specific place as a "brand" for their advertising – as well as a city magazine's own need to identify and satisfy a geographically defined audience – could lead to the construction of an image of this place that is particularly suitable to these business concerns, rather than constructed around the democratic needs of the citizens of the place. Greenberg finds that the city magazines in her analysis do present just such a "corporatized public sphere" (2000, p. 256), as opposed to a broadly constructed opportunity for discourse on a range of topics, both those commercially attractive and those less so. Additionally, it seems likely that regional magazines could be subject to the same forces as the city magazines Greenberg analyzed. Just as a city identity, as presented by local media, can be utilized as a brand or marketing tool, so could the constructed identity of a state or region, such as "Texas" or "the Pacific Northwest."

With regard to Texas specifically, Francaviglia (1995) has noted the power of the 'geopolitical' outline of Texas' mapped borders as a branding and symbolic tool. This shape has become a powerful, "tangible symbol of place" for Texans and non-Texans, providing an icon for Texas identity (Francaviglia, 1995, p. 223). He argues that "there is no better way to advertise a Texas product or service than to place it within the map boundaries," thanks to the values and concepts suggested by these shape (Francaviglia, 1995, p. 221). This phenomenon of "Tex-map mania," in which the Texas outline is used in a highly symbolic fashion across a range of products and messages, demonstrates the power of a geographic shape to represent a whole range of ideas and values for a large population.

The effectiveness of this shape in branding and logos, moreover, reflects more than the power of the specific values it represents; it also demonstrates the "ethnocentrism" of consumers. Some marketing research has supported the idea that people like to buy products that support their personal place preferences. For example, Shimp and Sharma (1987) found that many American consumers preferred the "Made in America" label not only for economic reasons, but also on the basis of patriotism and morality. For these "ethnocentric" consumers, the "sense of identity, feelings of belongingness, and…an understanding of what purchase behavior is acceptable or unacceptable to the ingroup" is more critical than the actual functional quality of the purchase itself (Shimp & Sharma, 1987, p. 280). Purchasing a Texas Instruments calculator marked with a Texas outline and a Texan brand may carry far more significance to a Texas customer than the inherent value of the product.

This use of identities, geographic and otherwise, as essentially marketing tools in media has been noted by other scholars as well. Morley, for example, describes the "heterophilia" of modern culture, in which "differences" are valued and commodified via products that can serve as markers of a unique identity; he provides the situation of so-called "world music" as one instance of the commodification of cultural difference that ultimately serves primarily the dominant (white) culture (2000, p. 234). Cultural differences, from Morley's perspective, are not so much celebrated for themselves by most people, but are instead an "indulgen[ce in] their own sense of the picturesque" (2000, p. 235).

From this point of view, the celebration of "Texan identity" as represented in *Texas Monthly* is not just a source of personal gratification for its purported characteristics of strength and uniqueness, but also an act of aesthetic fulfillment. This version of Texas is pleasing to the eye and soul, even as it bolsters the individual's self-formation as a unique and independent Texan. This commodified, mediated version of Texan identity, therefore, must retain that aesthetic value to still be valuable and pleasing; otherwise it lacks a significant component of its appeal. The magazine's content, then, may be constrained by both these "Texan" values and the desire to remain an aesthetically desirable product.

Furthermore, as a recent article in *Foreign Policy* describes, the art of "geo-branding" one's country or locality is becoming more widespread, and now is even the topic of a British quarterly journal called *Place Branding* (Kahn, 2006). For tourism – a significant part of many city and regional economies – media coverage can contribute to

the success of geo-branding, and can be more useful than the places' own marketing efforts: "Few big cities now produce promotional packages that do not include facsimile offprints from *Business Week, Fortune, Financial Times* or other prestigious journals…Always the credibility of such third party pieces is much higher than normal city advertising material" (Ward, 1998, p. 202).

The perceived authority of media coverage among audiences may allow those geo-branded media constructions of place to be especially powerful in creating a public sense of that place, despite their clear commercial constraints. Media representations of place are therefore likely to be strongly affected by numerous commercial concerns: the marketability of that place's perceived characteristics to consumers, the aesthetic appeal of the place and its representation, and the ability of businesses and other institutions to use that media outlet as a branding opportunity for tourism income. All of these considerations result in the audience's ability to "form their own virtual [Texas]…part mythic cliché invention, part surprising and hybrid invention, part narrative debris" (Campbell, 2005, p. 203).

Much of the critique of the contemporary, commodified "sense of place" argues that this postmodern reality represents a deterioration of "place" and of "community." Massey, however, has argued that "it has for long been the exception rather than the rule that place could simply be equated with community, and by that means provide a stable basis for identity" (1992, p. 13). She suggests that places have long been mobile and fluid in nature, and "communities" have been in flux with them. With this line of argument, the concept of media aiding in the formation of a place-related imagined community – while

including even those outside that place in the community – does not seem quite so strange or unusual, but merely another instance of the fluidity of community construction and personal identity.

The distinction here, however, for the purposes of analyzing *Texas Monthly* – a commercially motivated construction of community – is that this magazine creates a sense of difference and uniqueness deliberately for the purpose of retailing that identity to its audience. As Morley described above, this large-scale commodification of difference for the purpose of profit may indeed be a distinctive new process. Therefore, the means by which and reasons for *Texas Monthly*'s unique construction of Texan identity are worthy of further attention. If the magazine represents one way in which capitalist media commodify place for the purpose of profit, then we should investigate the processes underlying the construction of that place and the concepts that might be adopted by an audience seeking to utilize that construction in their own self-formation and exploration. Given the significance of such information to that "storehouse" of civic culture that Dahlgren mentions, this construction process seems critical to the ways in which individuals ultimately engage with their larger communities on an everyday basis, and to the issues and ideas they will judge to be worthy of attention to someone possessing their selected identity. Therefore, this study will seek to better understand that construction process and its potential implications for the *Texas Monthly* audience and beyond.

A Case Study of Texan Identity in Political Coverage

The construction of individuals' own Texan identity as a result of reading *Texas Monthly* – and their understanding of its applicability in the political context – might have been especially informed by paying attention to the magazine's coverage of President George W. Bush. In fact, the national media representation of Bush has likely been one of the most powerful forces in building a national imagination of "Texan identity" in the last decade. *Texas Monthly* has covered Bush for nearly 20 years, through his relationship with his father, his ownership of the Texas Rangers baseball team, his governorship, and his presidency. The logical basis for that coverage has of course been Bush's residency and political career in Texas, which began in 1978 with a failed run for Congress. However, the magazine may not always attribute to Bush the same version or degree of Texan identity, particularly as his political fortunes wax and wane. This study will provide a closer analysis of Bush's representation in the magazine to explore how the magazine applies and constructs its sense of Texas identity, and how the magazine maintains that identity even when the particular individual shown as Texan loses public esteem.

Other scholars have analyzed Bush's representation in the media and the various components of the presidential image crafted by his administration. For example, Mayer describes the message discipline and detailed stagecraft involved in presenting Bush as both an "Average American with Common Values" and a "War Leader" (2004, p. 626). Part of the former image relates to his presentation as a "man of the people, a person of typical values and simple small-town beliefs" (Mayer, 2004, p. 626). The "small town"

component of this image is inextricably linked to the president's portrayal as a country-dwelling Texan, centered on his ranch in Crawford, Texas – despite his significant ties to New England.

Therefore, Bush's asserted Texan identity has played a key role in the construction of his public image, even if this characteristic is not always explicitly referenced in this way. Other components of Bush's rhetoric and constructed personality also connect to stereotypical "ordinary Texan" ideals, such as Christian religiosity and the value of sports (Bostdorff, 2003; R. Johnson, 2002). Significantly, Bush's Texan identity, as shown in media and as suggested by his administration, is often set in opposition to an Eastern identity, which reinforces Bush's image as a "Washington outsider" and as an individual distinct from his New England family legacy (Cook, 2002). All of these components of Bush's "Texan" man-of-the-people image have helped him relate to voters; as Danner (2005) describes, Bush (at least early in his presidency) was often felt "to be speaking directly to [voters], to be bringing [them] into his family." The inclusion of Bush in *Texas Monthly*'s sense of Texan identity would likely also encourage such an identification and loyalty among his fellow Texans, who would probably value what they viewed as a shared identity.

A comprehensive analysis of Bush's constructed public persona, his statements, and his media coverage is provided by West and Carey (2006), with particular regard to the use of an "Old West" fantasy by Bush and his administration to characterize and justify policy decisions. Although not specifically Texan, the "Old West" narrative of cowboys, evil, and frontier justice that West and Carey describe certainly shares many

similarities with the classic image of "Texanness." West and Carey argue that, through his own public persona and through the statements of others in his administration, Bush has been deliberately constructed as a mythic American cowboy (who fights terrorists instead of outlaws). By means of this persona, Bush "fights for freedom and faith, defeats evil, negotiates between the individual and community, and is the archetypal hero" (West & Carey, 2006, p. 381).

This construction, these critics state, has been explicitly and purposefully shaped by the administration in speeches by both Bush and Vice President Dick Cheney, and as a result has been reflected in media coverage. The use of the Crawford ranch as a location for well-publicized meetings with international allies has aided in this construction, further emphasizing Bush's alleged Texan cowboy nature, his distance from traditional Washington politics, and his non-Eastern identity. Moreover, West and Carey argue, these decisions have actual policy ramifications. As Bush places himself at a symbolic distance from D.C. by relocating to the ranch, he also literally distances himself from the deliberative setting of policymaking. This distance, according to these authors, diminishes bipartisan and international policy efforts, and strengthens the image/reality of Bush and his closest staffers as the "posse," fighting alone in their vision of frontier justice (West & Carey, 2006, p. 399).

If Bush's constructed "cowboy" identity and policy do in fact rely upon these "Old West" concepts, then Texas itself is also implicated. *Texas Monthly*, which does return regularly to stories and images of Texas as part of "the American West," may also attempt to include Bush in their version of Texanness, and the assignment of Texan

identity in the magazine may shift in response to current events concerning Bush and his administration. Local newspapers are generally seen to provide more favorable coverage to national politicians and thereby help boost approval ratings among their audiences (Cohen & Powell, 2005; Peake, 2007), but a regional magazine may differ in its attitude and seek to apply a sense of regional identity in a more nuanced fashion.

Whatever the specific means of application of Texan identity to Bush may be in *Texas Monthly*, it seems likely that the mere application of it could intensify his appeal to voters who seek to share in the unique Texan identity. As Pels suggests, in contemporary mediated democracies, it is not so crucial for politicians to completely resemble their desired constituencies, but rather for voters to recognize themselves in a candidate and to trust the authenticity of what they perceive to be that candidate's qualities. He argues that "The trustful recognition of self in a public individual is therefore more like an encounter with a family member with whom one acknowledges a family resemblance…one that is always partial, distributed, and actively constructed" (Pels, 2003, p. 59). *Texas Monthly*'s ascription of Texan qualities of Bush in any form would allow a reader to construct his or her own set of similarities to his suggested Texan identity, uniting the broader sense of Texan identity provided by the magazine with a more specific political application and relevance of that identity. From Pels' perspective, then, this identification of Bush as Texan would likely encourage the *Texas Monthly* readership to construct a stronger sense of relationship with him, and perhaps even indirectly bolster support for him among this audience.

Investigating *Texas Monthly* from the Media Sociology Perspective

To draw together these multiple considerations of geography, identity, and journalistic production, I am utilizing insights from the sociology of news perspective, in which the content of journalism is considered in its context of creation and in the larger cultural and political environment. Schudson argues that if "news…is something people make," then a sociological approach will "emphasize the manufacturing process" (2002, p. 4). This approach is reflected in the work of Gaye Tuchman (1978) and Herbert Gans (1979), among others. Gans, for example, engaged in participant observation and conducted interviews in newsrooms at NBC, *Newsweek*, *Time*, and CBS, while also completing a content analysis of these news organizations' products. In doing so, he was able to observe not only the finished news that was presented to the public, but also the subtle and ideologically laden news values that were formed and applied in these working communities. Gans' research examines "the commercial, political, and other forces that produce the rules and values…the sources, audiences, and powerholders that impinge upon journalists from outside their news organization" (1979, p. xiv). According to Reese, Gans viewed journalists through the paradigm of traditional sociological study, and examined the "social structural determinants of [their] behavior" (1994, p. 7). This comprehensive approach is complex, but allows for a full consideration of many of the influences on journalists' work and the content of their products.

Kaniss (1991), also cited above, applied similar research methods to local television newsrooms. Kaniss' study addressed "the economic interests of media owners, the professional values of local journalists, and the media strategies of local officials,"

and how all of these considerations played distinct roles in the creation of local news content (1991, p. 2). Her study of local news recognized that these influences would factor into the newsmaking process differently for this distinct medium.

These researchers and others have created a precedent for studies like my own, in which observing newsrooms and interviewing journalists create opportunities for insight into the complex effects of multiple influences on their final products. Shoemaker and Reese (1995), drawing on a variety of research in this area, summarize these influences on journalists' output into a hierarchical model. This model arranges these five influences by their relative determinative power over journalists' efforts. In this model, *individual characteristics* of journalists are constrained by the *routines* of their daily work, which are largely determined by their employing *organizations*; those organizations are affected by "*extramedia*" entities, such as their sources and the government. All of these are affected by dominant *ideologies* circulating in society (Shoemaker & Reese, 1995, p. 54). As these authors describe, "combining these multiple levels of analysis draws our attention to the connections between them" (Shoemaker & Reese, 1995, p. 227). In this way, a comprehensive approach to analyzing *Texas Monthly*'s editorial and business practices, alongside its content, allows for the greatest insight into these connections, and into the multiplicity of ways the sense of Texan identity in the magazine is shaped by those with an interest in its content and profits. Furthermore, as Reese notes, "media sociology implicitly seeks to evaluate how well journalists perform their role in society" (1994, p. 3). A normative assessment of *Texas Monthly*'s presentation of Texan identity is a component of this study as well.

Texas Monthly will also require a somewhat different approach to study than have these prior studies, which primarily examined newspaper and broadcast journalism production. While extensive research has been conducted on the leadership and management structure of the newspaper newsroom, little research exists regarding magazine management, particularly with regard to the development of editorial content. Magazine management is very different from newspaper management. While reporters working in newspaper newsrooms do not have the authority to ensure that a particular story is printed, they do at least have intermediate editors to whom they can appeal for additional support; the newspaper editor-in-chief and publisher, while they hold most of the power to determine the content of the newspaper, still are part of a collaborative team. At *Texas Monthly* and most magazines, the editor-in-chief (and the publisher, to a lesser degree) has the direct responsibility and authority for what is printed in the magazine. Writers have little leverage in arguing for or against a particular story idea if the editor-in-chief opposes it.

As Ekinsmyth found in her in-depth interviews of British magazine editorial staffs, the magazine world also presents its own challenges to employees' lives, primarily in the form of a constant sense of job insecurity. While many media companies have faced layoffs and cutbacks in recent years, magazines have seemed to suffer the most, with a number of magazines closing completely and suddenly. Ekinsmyth notes, "The threat of a magazine losing its commercial edge looms heavily over employees, and experiences of overnight redundancies are common…many workers in the industry have little power to influence their own destiny, terms or conditions" (2002, p. 235). These

magazine staff members would seem to have few individual opportunities to influence the magazine product or the terms upon which it is created. Additionally, magazine workers are paid little, and work long hours to strict deadlines to produce each issue.

Magazine editorial staff members, therefore, must participate successfully on a team despite these challenges to their individual autonomy and power. Furthermore, Evans (2004) lists the number of different editorial staff positions filled at a typical large magazine, and notes the difficulty editors face in coordinating the staff to create a coherent magazine. He asks how the magazine can "…stay consistent with all these different people putting together the magazine's content and appearance every month? Disaster awaits the magazine if all these people don't hold a roughly similar vision…in their minds" (Evans, 2004, p. 45). He also notes the importance of editorial staff understanding "the magazine's character and history" (Evans, 2004, p. 51).

Therefore, one might ask how, in their insecure job positions, individuals are socialized into the magazine organization – into its vision, focus, character, and history – to become effective editorial team members. This aspect of journalists' socialization in the workplace has not been studied extensively, though its analysis dates back to Breed's study (1955) of what he called "social control" in the newspaper newsroom. He defined socialization as the way "the recruit discovers and internalizes the rights and obligations of his status and its norms and values. He learns to anticipate what is expected of him so as to win rewards and avoid punishments" (p. 328). Sigelman (1973) also identified this process in the newsroom, and used the term "attitude promotion" to describe the way editorial decisions steered reporters away from certain stories that would not represent the

organization positively. More recent studies, including Chomsky (1999), Soloski (1989), and Turow (1994), have also found similar subcurrents of editorial control among writers and reporters, suggesting that this means of manipulating editorial content is widespread among newspapers. Again, this "social control" effect may be intensified in the magazine setting, given its more hierarchical structure than found at newspapers.

Furthermore, given *Texas Monthly*'s nature as a regional magazine focused on a particular place, a form of socialization into a specific concept of the state of Texas – beyond the socialization into journalistic routines characteristic of the profession – therefore may become an implied part of employment on the editorial staff of the magazine. This socialized concept of Texas may limit writers' proposed story ideas – knowing that only those meeting the editor-in-chief's vision will be selected – and also cause them to write in ways which they know will adhere to that vision. The ideologies and routines shaping this concept of Texas will additionally be considered in this study, as well as the organizational factors in effect – specifically, the nature of the magazine as a commercial enterprise that to some degree must commodify the concept of Texas in order to produce a saleable product.

Research Questions

Texas Monthly, perhaps uniquely among magazines of its type, faces the special challenge of balancing these many potential influences on its content. Its audience, as Broyles acknowledged early in the magazine's life, aspires to appreciate their Texan identity more deeply; its staff seeks to produce journalism that is high-quality and that receives a positive response from readers; and its owners and advertisers hope to be involved in a highly profitable enterprise. The magazine represents an unusual and compelling confluence of these concerns, and as such presents a unique opportunity for their exploration in this case study. The research strategy of this study will begin by crafting a comprehensive picture of the content of *Texas Monthly*, utilizing content analysis to determine which topics and people the magazine tends to emphasize and de-emphasize in its construction of Texan identity. This analysis will also consider whether the magazine's picture of Texan identity has changed in significant ways after its acquisition by Emmis Communications in 1998, perhaps representing the influence of corporate and advertiser concerns as found in Greenberg's study (2000) of conglomerate-owned city magazines. Therefore, the first research question is:

RQ1: What is the nature of the Texan identity provided by *Texas Monthly*, and has that identity changed after the magazine's corporate acquisition?

1a. What topics are included in *Texas Monthly* as relevant to Texas identity?

1b. What is the quantity and style of political coverage in *Texas Monthly*?

1c. What type of images are shown in *Texas Monthly* cover photos?

1d. How often and in what ways are ethnicity and gender represented in *Texas Monthly* content?

1e. How are Texas symbols and photo composition used in *Texas Monthly* cover and feature story photos?

1f. What changes, if any, are visible in these areas of *Texas Monthly*'s content after the Emmis acquisition and after its editorial leadership changes?

As described above, because the media sociology approach examines news content as shaped by multiple influences, it is necessary to explore the full range of forces that come into play during the selection and composition of the magazine's content. To do so, this study incorporates in-depth interviews with both editorial and business staff members at *Texas Monthly*, as well as with representatives of its corporate owners and its advertisers. The second research question delineates the focus of these interviews, and provides a means of exploring the influences on *Texas Monthly*'s version of Texas identity.

RQ2: How do the various individuals and interests involved in the magazine's production – including its staff, owners, and advertisers – each influence the development of the Texan identity presented by *Texas Monthly*?

Finally, the third research question allows a demonstration of the magazine's application of its version of Texan identity within the political context. This textual analysis of coverage of George W. Bush in *Texas Monthly* seeks to explain how Texan identity is utilized to characterize a major political figure and his problematic career, while also

taking into account the magazine's commercial considerations.

RQ3: How does the magazine's coverage of President George W. Bush reflect the application of Texan identity in a political context?

Chapter 3

Research Methods

This study used a multimethod approach, involving quantitative content analysis, in-depth interviews, and textual analysis.

Content Analysis

It seems logical that a study concerned with the construction of Texas in *Texas Monthly* would engage in wide-ranging analysis of the magazine's content. The quantitative content analysis of this content, including both editorial and advertising content, allows for a deeper exploration of the magazine's version of the state, and also shows how it may have changed over time. This construction of Texas manifests itself through both editorial and advertising content, as well as through cover photos and the photos/graphics included with editorial content; therefore, all of these components were included in this content analysis. As Riffe, Lacy, and Fico define it,

> quantitative content analysis is the systematic and replicable examination of symbols of communication, which have been assigned numeric values according to valid measurement rules and the analysis of relationships involving those values using statistical methods, to describe the communication, draw inferences about its meaning, or infer from the communication to its context, both of production and consumption. (2005, p. 25)

Given this definition, this study uses content analysis to examine the content of *Texas Monthly,* to summarize it using statistical analysis of its numerically-described content, and then to draw inferences. These inferences, especially in the multimethod context of this study, concern the entire body of manifest content that is represented by this sample, as well as the research questions regarding the production of this content by the editorial and business staff of the magazine.

Toward these goals, a sample composed of 110 issues of *Texas Monthly* from 1990 through 2007 was analyzed. The issues from 1990 to July 2000 were analyzed using a constructed year technique, similar to the constructed week method often used in studying newspapers. Appropriate content analysis methodological guidelines for monthly magazines are not well established. However, for weekly newsmagazines, the monthly stratified sampling method (using one magazine to represent each month within a given time period) has been found most accurate when compared to a census of the entire year sampled (Riffe, Lacy, & Drager, 1996), and a constructed year method may perhaps offer a similar level of accuracy for analyzing a monthly magazine. To construct the years, one issue from each quarter of these years was randomly selected for analysis. In sum, 38 available issues of the magazine for the period from 1990 to the second quarter of 2000 were analyzed.

The other components of this research – the in-depth interviews and textual analysis – both concerned the magazine's processes and content under the leadership of the current editor, Evan Smith. Therefore, to provide a larger body of data to which the results of those methods might be compared and discussed, issues from the beginning of

Smith's installation as editor in the summer of 2000 were analyzed using a census. The census of these issues allowed for the quantitative composition of a picture of the magazine's most recent content. A total of 72 available issues of the magazine from the third quarter of 2000 through the December 2007 issue were analyzed.

Within the 110 total issues analyzed from 1990 to 2007, the cover photo, full-page advertisements that included people, feature story topics, and feature story photos were coded. This created a sample of 110 cover photos, 3,893 advertisements, 571 feature stories, and 2,502 feature story photos. For each of these items in the magazine, portrayals of people were coded for gender, ethnicity, and the person's occupation or role in the story or photo. (Only advertisements including people were coded in order to examine the types and groups of people who might be shown as "Texan" within advertisements; other types of advertisements were not considered as relevant to this concern. Additionally, occupation/role was not coded for advertisements, as these were often ambiguous; also, models might have been used to depict doctors or businesspeople, making such coding potentially inaccurate.)

Gender was coded for every individual shown in these advertisements, and each was classified as male, female, or as part of a mixed group of people. Ethnicity was coded as white, Hispanic, black, Asian, Middle Eastern, a mixed group of people of different ethnicities, or as unable to determine. The occupation or role of the individual shown/discussed in the photo or feature story was coded based on his or her portrayed profession or characterization within that editorial elements. For example, the occupation/role coding included categories of government/law/courts, entertainment,

business, criminal, victim of crime, and artists, among other relevant categories. (A complete list is shown in the codebook provided as an appendix.) Given Wilson and Gutierrez's (1995) observation, among other studies, suggesting that members of racial and ethnic minorities tend to be portrayed in specific roles most frequently – particularly those of criminals – this study included these coding categories in order to determine whether *Texas Monthly* tended to repeat similar patterns.

The backdrop of feature story photos and cover photos was coded in addition. This backdrop variable was included following Sorlin's (1999) study, described above, which mentions the role of a "landscape myth" in determining the relationship of people to their places. Therefore, images in *Texas Monthly* were coded in this regard to determine how their composition might contribute to a specific image of the Texan landscape and associated ideologies within the magazine's content and among its audience. The presence or absence of Texas symbols was also noted for cover photos, advertisements, and feature story photos. These Texas symbols included images such as Texas flags, Lone Star pictures, Alamo shapes, the state seal, or recognizable emblems of major Texas universities, such as the Longhorn silhouette used by the University of Texas at Austin. These symbols would likely endow the portrayals of those receiving them with an especially strong sense of Texan identity, thereby marking some individuals portrayed in the magazine as especially worthy of belonging to a particular ideal Texan identity.

Content from 13 issues of the magazine, or about 12 percent of all issues coded, was used to calculate intercoder reliability. Two coders coded the same editorial content

and advertisements in these issues. Reliability, based on simple percent agreement, averaged 93 percent across the key variables in the study, which included ethnicity, gender, occupation, feature story topic, and (for cover and feature story photos) the presence/absence of Texas symbols. This measure of reliability is acceptable for a study in which the variables of interest are nominal, and coders plainly either agree or disagree (Neuendorf, 2002, p. 149). The calculated degree of agreement also suggests high reliability; as Neuendorf notes, "reliability coefficients of .90 or greater would be acceptable" to all content analysts (2002, p. 143).

In-Depth Interviews

Before describing my interview efforts, I should note that I participated in an eight-month editorial internship at *Texas Monthly* from May to December 2001. As a result of this internship, I was equipped with some prior understanding of the magazine's editorial process. However, during the internship, I did not work closely with most of the people I interviewed for this study. I believe that my prior experience in the *Texas Monthly* offices enriched my ability to ask relevant questions of my interviewees.

As Kvale describes, the in-depth interview allows the researcher and interviewee together to engage in the construction of stories regarding the interviewee's experiences: "The subjects not only answer questions prepared by an expert, but themselves formulate in a dialogue their own conceptions of their lived world…[gaining] knowledge that can be used to enhance the human condition" (1996, p. 11). This constructivist and cooperative approach to interviewing, as opposed to a positivist view of the researcher's

objective and independent discovery, guided my interview approach in this study. By using an informal interview format for all interviews – structured somewhat by an outline but not confined by a rigid set of questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) – I was able to elicit detailed and insightful stories and descriptions of the world of *Texas Monthly* from my interviewees.

In-depth interviews were conducted with six members of the *Texas Monthly* staff, four from the editorial staff of the magazine and three from the business staff. These individuals were suggested to me by an editor at the magazine, and represented a range of experience at *Texas Monthly* and other magazines. Business representatives were included to learn how the business and editorial staffs interact, and to explore the role of advertising and circulation concerns in shaping the content of the magazine. These interviews took place at the *Texas Monthly* offices during November and December of 2003, and averaged 45 minutes to an hour.

In January 2008, I also conducted phone interviews with three representatives of business advertisers in *Texas Monthly* and with an executive of the publishing division of Emmis Communications, the corporate owner of *Texas Monthly*. These three interviews averaged 20 to 30 minutes each. I additionally interviewed by phone for about 45 minutes an editorial staff member at the magazine who works outside Texas.

This range of respondents was sought based on "appropriate experience" for this study: those who had been involved with *Texas Monthly* for a considerable period and possessed an understanding of its nature and processes from disparate angles (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). Respondents were told that they would not be identified by name, only in

general terms according to their role, to encourage them to speak freely about their experiences. Each staff member interviewed was asked general questions relating to his or her background and experience in journalism and at *Texas Monthly*, as well as more specific questions regarding the story selection process, the staff's definition of their audience, and the nature of the representation of Texas in the magazine. Those on the editorial staff were also asked about the diversity of people represented in the magazine, and about changes in the magazine's content over time. Business representatives from the magazine, including its advertisers, were asked about the advertising process and about the audience that they envisioned for the magazine and its advertisements.

These in-depth interviews, taken as a whole, allowed for rich insight into the editorial and business processes of the magazine. Interviewees provided elaboration upon significant issues related to the construction of Texas in *Texas Monthly*, and also commented upon specific aspects of the magazine that were relevant to the content analysis portion of the study. As such, the data gathered from the in-depth interviews became useful to "check out theories…formulated through naturalistic observation, to verify independently (or triangulate) knowledge…gained through participation as members of particular cultural settings, or to explore multiple meanings of or perspectives on some actions, events, or settings" (J. M. Johnson, 2001, p. 104). The interview component of this research permitted the connection of my personal experiences of *Texas Monthly* as a reader, my knowledge of *Texas Monthly* from my internship, and the quantitative and qualitative analyses of the magazine's content.

Textual Analysis

To generate further insight for this study, I also analyzed *Texas Monthly*'s coverage of Governor, and then President, George W. Bush through the course of 98 articles published from 1992 to December 2007. As Curtin (1995) notes, the term "textual analysis" is used in varied ways, often without a clear explanation for exactly what the analyst is doing. However, I here employ the term to describe what Curtin calls "decenter[ing] the text to deconstruct it, working back through the narrative's mediations of form, appearance, rhetoric, and style to uncover the underlying social and historical processes, the metalanguage that guided its production" (1995, p. 11). Curtin distinguishes this type of analysis from literary criticism, discourse analysis, and qualitative content analysis by noting that these other methods utilize specific terminologies and critical approaches that are unique to their fields. In contrast, the variety of textual analysis in which I here engage adopts a critical viewpoint that includes attention to the "conditions of production and consumption" and the "ideological dimensions structuring…news" (1995, p. 18).

Philo (2007), however, notes the limitations of textual analysis, specifically in the form of discourse analysis:

> discourse analysis which remains text-based encounters a series of problems specifically in its ability to show: (1) the origins of competing discourses and how they relate to different social interests; (2) the diversity of social accounts compared to what is present (and absent) in a specific text; (3) the impact of external factors such as professional ideologies on the manner in which the discourses are

represented; and (4) what the text actually means to different parts of the audience. (2007, p. 185)

Philo here indicates the challenge of conducting discourse analysis, or any variety of textual analysis, in isolation from other methods that can encompass other significant factors of a text. Looking only at a text and restricting one's analysis to its contents prevents a full consideration of its construction and consumption process. Philo supports a more comprehensive approach to textual analysis that can take into account these other components of a text's lifespan. Likewise, this study, via the media sociology approach, attempts to consider multiple significant components of a text, including not only the content of *Texas Monthly*, but also the processes by which its staff composes that content and a specific case study of the implications of the magazine's coverage of George W. Bush.

To this end, I obtained copies of all 98 articles described above, either in digital PDF format as originally published (scanned from pages of the magazine, and including all visual components in their original layout) or in full copies of the magazine. I read all 98 articles, looking specifically for textual evidence of the ascription of "Texan" or other geographically descriptive terms to Bush, his family, or other significant individuals involved in his administration. After locating these elements in all 98 articles, I examined the trends in geographic descriptions of Bush, looking for changes over time from 1992 to 2007. I also considered the relationship of these geographic descriptors to Bush's political career and significant events during his administration. To complement this textual analysis, I also examined the visual elements accompanying these articles to

construct Bush as Texan or as otherwise connected to specific places. I looked for symbols of Texas and other locales to determine how Bush was linked to these particular places as part of his construction in these articles. This approach to analyzing this subsection of the magazine's content allowed me to examine deeply the construction of Bush as "Texan" within the magazine, and also to relate that construction to the knowledge of the magazine's editorial structure gained through the in-depth interview portion of the study. This multimethod approach enabled a multifaceted examination of the magazine's content and construction, as both Philo and Curtin would likely advocate.

Chapter 4

The Content of *Texas Monthly*, 1990-2007

This content analysis sought to explore the nature of Texan identity as presented within the pages of *Texas Monthly*, and to examine whether the portrayal of that identity changed following the magazine's acquisition by Emmis Communications in 1998. As a whole, the concept of Texan identity presented in the magazine does include significant political aspects, but also tends to de-emphasize the presence and roles of racial and ethnic minorities and of women in its representation of the state.

The sample for this content analysis consisted of 110 cover photos, 3,893 advertisements, 571 feature stories, and 2,502 feature story photos. During the period covered by this sample, the magazine offered readers a considerable amount of political coverage, in addition to many stories on entertainment and service topics (particularly travel and food). The political coverage often took the form of profiles of specific politicians. Additionally, three out of four of the magazine's covers featured popular or service-oriented topics (i.e., entertainment or travel/food), rather than political or news-related topics, perhaps to appear more attractive to readers at the newsstand or supermarket checkout. The magazine also tended to cover white people in its feature stories more often, and devoted less coverage to members of racial and ethnic minorities and to women, as has been found to be the tendency in other media products. Throughout the sample, then, the Texan identity in the magazine appears to be ascribed primarily to

white individuals, especially white males, even while it does include a noteworthy component of concern for political and social issues.

A comparison of the magazine's content before and after its acquisition by Emmis revealed little alteration in its content. One notable difference in this sample before and after the Emmis acquisition was that cover photos perhaps tended to be somewhat more service-oriented. This change may suggest that Emmis' acquisition and business influence has led the magazine not to alter its internal content mix significantly, but instead to change its marketing approach, primarily through its selection of covers. Potential readers may perhaps find the service-oriented covers more attractive on the newsstand than the news-oriented covers.

The proportion of feature stories on political topics, in particular, remained largely constant with the acquisition, if not slightly increased, contrary to expectations about conglomerates' unwillingness to invest in such coverage. However, a second difference in the magazine's content after the Emmis acquisition was that the presentation of politics was perhaps slightly more personalized through profiles of politicians than prior to the acquisition. This appeal to readers on the basis of human interest, rather than the presentation of politics through coverage of individual issues, might also reflect a desire to make the magazine more enticing to its audience. Finally, an evaluation of the content produced under the leadership of different editors also demonstrated the magazine's consistency in all of these areas.

As a whole, the image of Texan identity presented in the content of *Texas Monthly* throughout this sample remained remarkably coherent, with a strong emphasis

on the political components of Texan life (personalized or otherwise), but perhaps also a tendency to diminish the role of racial and ethnic minorities and women within its depiction of Texan identity. Despite concern about the impact of corporate ownership on the magazine's representation of Texan identity, *Texas Monthly*'s portrayal appears to have been quite consistent, but perhaps still deficient in important ways.

Research Question 1a:
What topics are included in *Texas Monthly* as relevant to Texas identity?

The breakdown of the magazine's feature stories by topic across the entire 17 years of sampled content is reflected in Table 1 below. In this list of topics, "culture and society" includes such subjects as education, religion, and Texas history.

Table 1
Topics of Feature Stories in Texas Monthly*, 1990-2007 (n=571)*

Topic	Percentage of All Feature Stories
Politics/military	20.1%
Entertainment	17.3
Travel and food	14.9
Crime	12.4
Culture and society	12.4
Other topics	11.6
Sports	7.0
Business	4.2
Total	100

Clearly, the magazine has a strong focus on politics and current events, though stories on entertainment topics – such as profiles of actors and musicians – are a close second priority for the magazine. The magazine also contains a high proportion of "service" journalism, in what Emmis calls the magazine's role as a "leisure guide," covering Texas travel destinations, as well as food and restaurants in Texas. Crime and

Texas culture are explored in many stories, at much higher rates than business or even sports are covered in the magazine.

Research Question 1b:
What is the quantity and style of political coverage in *Texas Monthly*?

The 99 stories strictly focused on politics (excluding those addressing the military) were further analyzed with regard to their approach to the topic: as a story broadly covering a specific issue, or as a profile of an individual politician. The purpose of this analysis was to determine how frequently political issues were personalized through the character of an individual politician, giving them a "human interest" feel while also presenting a political concern to the audience. The "human interest" approach to political topics would likely be interesting to the magazine's audience, but would also perhaps rely on the appeal of "scandal" or political celebrity, while also possibly containing less substantive coverage than an "issue-based" story with its focus on a specific individual. The proportionate use of these two approaches is shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Types of Political Stories, 1990-2007 (n=99)

Type of Story	Percentage of Political Stories
Politician profile	59%
Political issue	41
Total	100

In the majority of its political stories, the magazine addresses politics through the lens of a specific politician's profile, rather than analyzing a particular political issue more broadly as it might affect the state. Notably, many of these politicians garner coverage because of their involvement in scandals or for their notorious personalities, such as Tom

DeLay and Dick Cheney, both of whom have been featured on the magazine's cover in recent years and who could qualify as political "celebrities." It appears from these data that the magazine takes a personalized approach to politics, as opposed to a broader discussion of issues from a wider perspective.

Research Question 1c:
What type of images are shown in *Texas Monthly* cover photos?

The cover photos used by the magazine also reveal its preference for some topics over others. *Texas Monthly* most frequently uses covers that feature popular entertainment figures and "service"-oriented topics (such as images of travel destinations or of food); however, about a quarter of its covers feature politicians and news-related issues, as shown in Table 3. Again, however, the politicians shown on the magazine's cover tend to be those with national status (such as George W. Bush), those involved in scandal, or those otherwise intriguing to the public.

Table 3
Types of Cover Images, 1990-2007 (n=110)

Type of Cover Image	Percentage of Cover Images
Popular/service-oriented	75.5%
News-oriented	25.5
Total	100

Research Question 1d:
How often and in what ways are ethnicity and gender represented in *Texas Monthly* content?

The analysis of Texan identity in *Texas Monthly* must also include a consideration of who is shown to warrant inclusion in the magazine that seeks to represent Texas. As the magazine presents its image of Texanness, some groups may receive less

representation in that image than others. Their appearance in *Texas Monthly* suggests a certain eligibility to receive the attribute of "Texan" and thereby to belong to this purported Texan identity. However, although Texas is a highly diverse state, the content of *Texas Monthly* is less so, leaving Texan identity primarily ascribed to a limited group: specifically, white people. This content analysis demonstrates that the magazine consistently focuses on white individuals in its feature stories and photos, and its advertising also overwhelmingly features white people. For example, in this sample, 92 percent of cover photos that featured a person portrayed white people; of the advertisements in this sample, about 83 percent portrayed white people. As a whole, even the entire sample of editorial content from the magazine includes few representatives of racial and ethnic minorities, as reflected by Table 4.

Table 4
Texas Monthly*'s Portrayal of Race and Ethnicity in Editorial Content and Advertising, 1990-2007*

Racial/Ethnic Group	Cover Photo (*n*=110)	Feature Story Photo (*n*=2,502)	Person as Topic of Feature Story (*n*=571)	Advertising (*n*=3,893)
White	70.0%	64.1%	43.8%	82.9%
Hispanic	1.8	8.1	5.6	1.0
Black	3.6	6.2	4.0	3.5
Middle Eastern	0.9	0.4	0.5	0.1
Asian	0	0.3	0.4	0.7
Native American	0	0.3	0.2	0
Other/can't identify	1.8	1.2	0.4	0.7
Mixed group of individuals	3.6	4.5	7.7	11.0
Does not include person*	18.2	14.9	37.5	N/A
Total	100	100	100	100

**This category includes items not focused on specific people whose race or ethnicity could be coded, such as landscape photos or food/travel stories. Advertisements not featuring a person were not coded; therefore, this category does not apply.*

Moreover, an additional concern raised by this content analysis is that when individuals of racial and ethnic minorities do appear in *Texas Monthly*, they most frequently do so in stereotypical roles often attributed to them in the media, and certainly are not represented as frequently as are white people in positions of power in Texas. Table 5 demonstrates these differential portrayals of white and non-white individuals when they are the focus of *Texas Monthly* feature stories.

Table 5
Representations of White and Non-White Individuals as Texas Monthly *Feature Story Topics, 1990-2007*

Representation	White (*n*=249)	Non-White (*n*=61)
Government/law/courts	23.6%	18.0%
Entertainment	16.8	14.8
Ordinary people	14.8	19.7
Criminal	10.0	13.1
Artists/authors	10.0	4.9
Business/education	9.6	6.6
Athletes/sports	6.4	14.8
Victim of crime	4.0	4.9
Religion	2.8	1.6
Other	2.0	1.6
Total	100	100

Chi-square result: $p < .01$

Clearly, white individuals are not only disproportionately represented in the magazine's feature stories, but they are also most frequently shown in positions of political and social power. Meanwhile, non-white people in *Texas Monthly* most often appear as "ordinary people," such as the residents of a town under discussion in an article. Some do also appear in political roles, though this occurred almost as frequently as rather more stereotypical portrayals of non-white individuals as involved in entertainment or sports.

Although the rarity and stereotypical nature of portrayals of minorities has been noted across many media products, the continuation of this trend into *Texas Monthly* seems especially problematic, given its purported desire to represent all of Texas for its readers, and to craft a Texan identity that includes the full variety of Texans. The overall portrayal of Texan identity in *Texas Monthly*'s content, both editorial and advertising, focuses on white people and more frequently represents them as possessing political and

social power. Meanwhile, people of racial and ethnic minorities much less frequently appear in those roles, and are instead relegated to stereotypical roles where they have lesser impact on the political and social realities of the state. This representation appears to limit the attribution of Texan identity primarily to white individuals, and also to withhold portrayals of exemplars of political and social action from the many other racial and ethnic groups who exist within the borders of Texas.

Similar patterns of coverage are visible in the magazine's representations of gender. Women, like racial and ethnic minorities, are less frequently portrayed in the magazine's stories and photos overall, and are also less likely to be portrayed as possessing positions of political or social power. Two prominent examples of women in power who have been portrayed in the magazine are former governor Ann Richards and current Texas senator Kay Bailey Hutchison. Meanwhile, women dominate the magazine's advertising. Of the 3,893 ads coded for this study, women alone were featured in 39 percent, while men alone appeared in 30 percent; mixed groups of men and women accounted for the remaining 30 percent of the ads. Women are likely a desirable target audience for the magazine's advertisers, and yet the content assembled by its staff does not necessarily reflect a particularly broad view of women's roles, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Representations of Men and Women as Texas Monthly *Feature Story Topics, 1990-2007*

Representation	Men (*n*=224)	Women (*n*=78)
Government/law/courts	24.1%	16.7%
Entertainment	15.6	19.2
Ordinary people	12.5	14.1
Criminal	11.6	10.3
Athletes/sports	10.7	7.7
Artists/authors	10.7	5.1
Business/education	9.4	6.4
Religion	3.1	0
Victim of crime	0	12.8
Mixed group/other	5.4	7.6
Total	100	100

Chi-square result: $p < .01$

These data reveal that the most reliable way for a woman to appear in *Texas Monthly*'s feature stories is if she is linked to the entertainment industries in some way. Although the second most frequent portrayal of women in the feature stories was within the context of government and politics, the actual proportion of feature stories on women and men portrayed in this field is dramatic. For every one woman shown in a feature story to hold such a position of power, over four men are portrayed in similar roles in *Texas Monthly* features. Otherwise, women are also frequently shown within the magazine's stories as ordinary people or as victims of crime. Again, though these patterns of media portrayals of women have been noted elsewhere, their appearance in *Texas Monthly*, with its distinct desire to define Texan identity, suggests that some individuals – men – are more worthy of the assignment of Texan identity, and especially of power to utilize that identity in politically and socially significant ways.

Research Question 1e:
How are Texas symbols and photo composition used in *Texas Monthly* cover and feature story photos?

Two other variables coded in this content analysis were the use of Texas symbols in the magazine and the backdrop of cover/feature story photos. Surprisingly, the use of Texas symbols in the magazine proved minimal. Only 22 percent of the cover photos coded included some type of Texas symbol, and only 7 percent of the feature story photos utilized Texas symbols. Perhaps even more surprisingly, only 1 percent of the advertisements in the magazine played upon Texas symbols to appeal to the magazine's readers, despite the magazine's specialized nature.

The coding of the backdrop of photos utilized with feature stories showed that the great majority (87 percent) of the cover and feature story photos, considered together, did not portray a rural, urban, or iconic Texan background; instead, they were images of an interior space or were closely cropped on a specific focal point, such as a person. However, as with the use of Texas symbols, the fact that the magazine does not play upon recognizable Texas imagery to reinforce a sense of Texan identity in its pages is interesting, and suggests that the magazine may use other, more subtle techniques to suggest "Texanness," or perhaps does not find such visible references to Texan identity to be necessary at all.

Research Question 1f:
What changes, if any, are visible in these areas of *Texas Monthly*'s content after the Emmis acquisition and after its editorial leadership changes?

Another major research question of this study is whether the magazine's editorial content changed significantly after Emmis Communications acquired it in 1998. The content of the magazine from 1990 to 1998 was compared to the content of the magazine from 1998 to 2007. Although the two samples were somewhat disparate in size, they do allow for a comparison of the content before and after the acquisition, and at least a sense of the major trends, if any, in the magazine's coverage through this ownership transition.

Research on media conglomerates' effects on journalism suggests that the general quality of journalistic products (in terms of their inclusion of coverage with political and social significance) may decline following a publication's transition from independent media company to part of a conglomerate. It is argued that substantive coverage of politics and social issues may be diminished by corporate owners seeking to create a more advertising- and consumer-oriented publication. In the case of *Texas Monthly*, however, this observation does not seem to apply, or may only apply in more subtle ways. For example, the proportion of coverage of political and social issues in the magazine has largely remained consistent from 1990 to 2007, despite the Emmis acquisition, as shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7
Topics of Feature Stories in Texas Monthly*, Before and After Emmis Acquisition (n=571)*

Topic	Pre-Emmis (*n*=140)	Post-Emmis (*n*=431)
Entertainment	22.1%	15.8%
Politics/military	15.7	21.6
Travel and food	17.1	14.2
Crime	12.9	12.3
Culture and society	11.4	12.8
Business	7.9	3.0
Other topics	6.4	13.2
Sports	6.4	7.2
Total	100	100

Chi-square result: p > 0.1, n.s.

Although minor differences are apparent in these figures and, in fact, there is even an increase in political and social topics in the magazine after its acquisition, the differences between the pre- and post-Emmis feature story topic distributions are not statistically significant. Furthermore, other factors may account for the slight increase in political coverage – particularly the election of former Texas governor George W. Bush to the presidency in 2000, and the attendant coverage of him before and after that event. Another major factor may be coverage of Texas' military during the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, which occurred after the Emmis acquisition; this topic was covered occasionally in the magazine.

Though the magazine's coverage of political and social content may have increased slightly after the Emmis acquisition, it is also worth investigating the nature of this coverage further. While, again, the differences are not statistically significant, the content analysis does show at least a slight increase in the magazine's tendency, noted

above, to present politics through individual political profiles rather than broader discussions of issues. This personalization of politics is closer to a celebrity-focused way of addressing this topic, rather than approaching stories simply through a framework of how an issue might affect Texas more broadly (as in one *Texas Monthly* story on the legal basis for water rights in Texas, for example). Table 8 demonstrates the changes in this coverage.

Table 8
Types of Political Stories Before and After Emmis Acquisition (n=99)

Type of Story	Pre-Emmis (*n*=21)	Post-Emmis (*n*=78)
Politician profile	52.4%	60.3%
Political issue	47.6	39.7
Total	100	100

Chi-square result: p > 0.1, n.s.

Another interesting difference in the magazine's content before and after the Emmis acquisition is evident in an analysis of its cover photos. Although these differences are not statistically significant, the magazine's covers have perhaps inclined somewhat more toward featuring popular entertainers or "service" topics after the Emmis acquisition, and moved somewhat away from news or political topics. Table 9 shows this shift.

Table 9
Types of Cover Images, Before and After Emmis Acquisition (n=110)

Type of Cover Image	Pre-Emmis (*n*=27)	Post-Emmis (*n*=83)
Popular/service-oriented	70.4%	77.1%
News-oriented	29.6	22.9
Total	100	100

Chi-square result: p > 0.1, n.s.

In addition, the portrayals of race/ethnicity and gender before and after the Emmis acquisition were analyzed for any potential changes. The quantity of advertising in the magazine increased dramatically, from an average of 20 coded full-page ads per issue prior to the Emmis acquisition to an average of 35 per issue after Emmis; furthermore, these figures reflect only ads showing people, as described in the methods section, so the actual number of ads per issue may in reality have been even greater. With this increase, the portrayals of people in the advertisements also diversified only slightly. Before the Emmis acquisition, non-white individuals were shown in 5 percent of the magazine's advertising, and after the acquisition were included in 6 percent. (This change may be partly attributable to the magazine's increased use, post-Emmis, of special advertising sections on topics like education and healthcare, in which more diverse portrayals often appear; this issue will be discussed further in the next chapter.)

The content of the magazine also diversified slightly after the acquisition. Although the proportion of feature stories about white individuals increased slightly (from 42 to 44 percent), stories about Hispanic individuals increased from 3 to 7 percent of all stories, and stories about people of other groups also appeared occasionally after the acquisition. However, both of these increases in portrayals of racial/ethnic minorities in advertising and in feature stories were not statistically significant. Furthermore, the specific representations in the feature stories of non-white individuals – as involved in sports, entertainment, etc. – also remained largely unchanged before and after the Emmis acquisition. This analysis thus shows that the Emmis takeover did little, if anything, to

change the diversity of individuals included in the magazine's version of "Texas identity."

Similar findings resulted for the analysis of gender representations before and after the Emmis acquisition. The proportion of male versus female portrayals in advertisements was somewhat similar before and after the 1998 takeover. Representations of men alone in advertisements stayed largely constant (32 percent versus 30 percent), yet representations of women alone in ads decreased (from 46 percent pre-Emmis to 38 percent post-Emmis). The difference in portrayals of women alone might be due to an increase in ads featuring mixed groups of men and women together, which grew by 10 percent to 32 percent after the Emmis acquisition. Many of these ads may also have been those included in the magazine's growing number of advertising special sections, as mentioned above.

Within the magazine's feature stories, gender representations again did not differ significantly, though representations of men were more frequent after the Emmis acquisition. Men were the focus of 30 percent of feature stories prior to 1998, and in 42 percent after, while women accounted for only 13 percent before 1998 and 14 percent after. Feature stories concerning mixed groups of both men and women also diminished somewhat after the acquisition (from 14 to 8 percent), while stories that did not focus on people at all decreased in proportion from 44 to 36 percent. Therefore, the shift in stories seems to have been from representations of women, mixed groups, and other topics to portrayals specifically of men. This shift may also be attributable to the increased

coverage of political topics, as addressed above, and the larger role of men in that coverage.

Finally, the cover photos used by *Texas Monthly* are an additional point for more detailed analysis. As described above, the magazine's overall non-advertising content tended to include slightly more racial/ethnic diversity after the Emmis acquisition, and also tended to portray men more frequently. However, the magazine's covers have not followed these trends in the same way. Table 10 demonstrates a different alteration of the variety of images used on the magazine's cover.

Table 10
Ethnicity and Gender in Cover Images, Before and After Emmis Acquisition

Type of Cover Image	Pre-Emmis (*n*=27)	Post-Emmis (*n*=83)
Men	51.9%	50.6%
Women	29.6	20.5
Mixed group	7.4	8.4
Covers without people	11.1	20.5
Total	100	100
White	77.8%	67.5%
Non-white	11.1	7.2
Mixed group	0	4.8
Covers without people	11.1	20.5
Total	100	100

Chi-square result for gender: $p < .01$; chi-square result for ethnicity: $p < .01$.

This content analysis reveals that while the content of *Texas Monthly* has become somewhat more diverse inside the magazine – both in its advertising and editorial content – its covers have changed in nature. Specifically, the magazine has shifted away from portrayals of non-white individuals on its covers (as a percentage of the total covers) and, in fact, away from portrayals of people at all. Only 11 percent of the pre-Emmis acquisition covers did not portray a person, but after the Emmis acquisition, about 21

percent of the covers did not include a person. Instead, these covers represent topics in other ways, such as December 2007's "Steak" cover that merely pictured a steak. It also appears from these data that the slight increase in service-oriented covers (also as reflected in Table 9) has come at the expense of portrayals of women and minorities on the cover of the magazine, as the proportion of covers featuring white men is nearly identical before and after the Emmis acquisition.

The more frequent use of abstract service-oriented topics on the magazine's cover after the Emmis acquisition may reflect a strategic alteration of its covers by the magazine to better compete in the magazine marketplace. Of course, politics and news might simply be regarded as less appealing to the audience, and so those topics might appear less frequently on the cover for that reason. However, there may also be another explanation, one that also takes into account that celebrities haven't just replaced the politicians on the cover; instead, these service topics have appeared. It may be that, to avoid mirroring the news or celebrity covers that might be used on other magazines on the newsstand, the portrayal instead of an abstracted "Texan" item could better distinguish *Texas Monthly*'s unique nature, and attract purchasers' attention more strongly. For example, yet another magazine cover featuring George W. Bush, or "American Idol" star (and Texan) Kelly Clarkson, would likely blend into the mass of similar images on the supermarket checkout line; but a cover like *Texas Monthly*'s "Steak" issue, featuring a lone, rare, and very red chunk of meat against a plain white background, is truly distinctive, even if steak is also a nationwide phenomenon and not especially uniquely Texan. This approach for composing more attention-getting covers

for *Texas Monthly* might be seen to help it develop its own "Texan" market niche, in opposition to the similarity among many national magazines that cover the same topics and people weekly or monthly.

Who Drives Change in *Texas Monthly*'s Content: the Editor or Owners?

Considering the timeline of *Texas Monthly*'s history, recounted earlier in this study, it is necessary to question whether the changes in its covers and internal content described above are in fact due to the acquisition of the magazine by Emmis Communications in 1998, or whether they might instead be attributed to the installation of a new editor-in-chief shortly thereafter in 2000. To address this question, the sample was subdivided and these analyses conducted again, to reflect the tenures of both Evan Smith, the editor who took over in July 2000, and the previous editor, Gregory Curtis, who led the magazine in the production of the content from 1990 to June 2000 that was included in this sample.

This alternate approach to comparing the magazine's content over time reflected few differences from a comparison of its content before and after the Emmis takeover. The mix of feature story topics in the magazine remained largely the same from Curtis's to Smith's leadership, as shown in Table 11 below.

Table 11
Topics of Feature Stories in Texas Monthly *by Editor-in-Chief (n=571)*

Topic	Gregory Curtis, Editor (*n*=166)	Evan Smith, Editor (*n*=405)
Entertainment	21.7%	15.6%
Politics/military	16.3	21.7
Travel and food	15.1	14.8
Crime	13.3	12.1
Culture and society	12.0	12.6
Sports	8.4	6.4
Other topics	6.6	13.6
Business	6.6	3.2
Total	100	100

Chi-square result: $p < .01$.

Other than the increase in political coverage from Curtis to Smith's editorship (which as discussed above might be due to current events, rather than a distinctive editorial goal), the proportions of topical coverage in the magazine have remained remarkably consistent. The significant difference found in the statistical test reported above is likely due to the larger proportion of political and military coverage in the magazine under Smith's leadership. Additionally, a comparison of this table to Table 7, which portrays the topics in the magazine before and after the Emmis acquisition, reveals little difference.

To further address the concern of whether the owners or editor initiated the changes in content over time, the specific changes during Smith's own editorship can be analyzed. If his tenure as editor is divided in half, it is possible to compare the first and second halves, and the magazine's content during those periods, to determine whether major alterations have occurred during Smith's service as editor-in-chief. As Table 12 reflects, it seems that again, consistency is the rule at *Texas Monthly*. With the exception once again of political coverage, the magazine's feature story topic distribution was

largely the same in the first 45 issues Smith produced that were included in this sample (August 2000 through September 2004), as in the second set of 45 issues (October 2004 to December 2007).

Table 12
Topics of Feature Stories in Texas Monthly *During One Editor's Leadership (n=405)*

Topic	Smith's First 45 Issues (*n*=190)	Smith's Second 45 Issues (*n*=215)
Politics/military	18.9%	24.2%
Entertainment	18.9	12.6
Travel and food	13.7	15.8
Crime	13.7	10.7
Culture and society	14.2	11.2
Other topics	12.1	14.9
Sports	6.3	6.5
Business	2.1	4.2
Total	100	100

Chi-square result: $p < .01$.

Therefore, any changes in the editorial content of *Texas Monthly* seem as due to the changing ownership of the magazine as to Smith's editorship. However, Smith's attainment of that position may also have been related to the changing ownership of the magazine, given the mere 18 months that passed between the Emmis acquisition and Smith's ascent to the editor-in-chief position. Because the two ways of comparing these changes over time leave doubt over the cause of the changes, it seems necessary to question how the editor and the owners of the magazine might in fact interact to shape the magazine's resulting content mix, and what other forces influenced these alterations in the magazine's makeup over time. The next chapter will provide the results of in-depth interviews with individuals involved in *Texas Monthly*, and allow the opportunity to

explore in greater detail the interaction of these various influences upon the magazine's content.

Texan Identity in *Texas Monthly*, 1990-2007

Overall, the analysis of this sample of the magazine's content reveals that the magazine represents a broad mix of various aspects of Texan identity through its inclusion of a range of topics. Prominent among these is a concern for politics, and the priority given to this coverage in the magazine suggests that its professed Texan identity includes an awareness of the state's political figures and issues. Politics, while often personalized, is a consistent part of the magazine's content. Political coverage has not been overwhelmed by service journalism or entertainment topics, although these do often appear on the magazine's cover, likely to enhance its marketability.

Furthermore, the magazine's acquisition by Emmis does not seem to have altered the range of topics portrayed as "Texan" in the magazine. The context mix is remarkably stable before and after the magazine's change in ownership, and even before and after a shift in its editorial leadership. Coverage of political and social issues appears to have remained constant, if not slightly increased, during these changes in the magazine's structure and control, though current news events might account for some of the apparent increase. Political life appears to be an enduring component of the Texan identity presented in this magazine.

At the same time, however, the people represented as engaged and influential in Texan life and politics within this magazine's pages are rather narrow in their

demographic composition, despite the state's actual diversity. Men and white people are primarily portrayed in positions of power in Texas, while women and racial and ethnic minorities are less often shown to possess such authority. Although this pattern of coverage of women and of minorities exists in other media as well, the limitation of a geographic identity to certain groups, within a geographically definitive publication like *Texas Monthly* (as it views itself), seems especially problematic. This is particularly true considering the publication's claim to journalistic excellence. The magazine appears to have narrowed its construction of Texan identity in ways that exclude a large component of the Texan population from the claim to that identity. The following chapters will examine how this construction of Texan identity that is visible in the magazine's content has been shaped by its editorial and business practices.

Chapter 5

In-Depth Interviews

In this chapter, I will discuss the in-depth interviews I conducted with various individuals involved in the production of *Texas Monthly*. Because the media sociology perspective acknowledges that a range of factors may shape the content of media products, these interviews garner insight into the varying power and effects of these influences. These interviews target the second research question earlier stated: "How do the various individuals and interests involved in the magazine's production – including its staff, owners, and advertisers – each influence the development of the Texan identity presented by *Texas Monthly*?" In these interviews, I wanted to learn about three primary issues: first, who has the power to shape the ultimate editorial content of the magazine; second, how Texas identity is defined by those who hold that power; and third, how *Texas Monthly*'s position as part of Emmis Communications and as a profit-making enterprise might affect the definition of Texas identity visible in the magazine's content.

As a whole, these interviews suggest that while the editor of the magazine has a strong role in shaping its content, the overall consistency of *Texas Monthly*'s content over time (demonstrated in the preceding chapter's content analysis) is likely due to the magazine's desire to maintain a consistent audience for advertisers. Particularly following its acquisition by Emmis Communications, the staff reports in these interviews that the magazine's business motives have to some degree shaped the content of the magazine, especially in consideration of their advertisers' desire to appeal to a wealthy,

urban audience. Although the interviewees argue that the staff is making an effort to diversify the magazine's content, the influence of the desire to reach a specific audience has perhaps maintained the relative homogeneity of the people represented in the magazine as "Texan." It has also may have encouraged a subtle shift of the magazine's coverage of political and social topics toward a "softer" approach that is thought more appealing to the magazine's target audience. The need for the magazine to compete on the national level for advertising also may be seen to diminish the uniquely Texan identity that might be presented in the magazine. Finally, whether *Texas Monthly* constructs a coherent, identifiable Texan identity in the first place is left in question, as these interviews reveal the malleable nature of this concept within the magazine's pages.

Who shapes the content of *Texas Monthly*?

The editor-in-chief is the magazine. In my interviews, it became clear that the staff members of the magazine, as well as the executive at Emmis whom I interviewed, felt that the editor-in-chief controlled the editorial content of the magazine. However, while the editor has a high degree of control over the magazine's content, other factors also affect his decisions and the magazine's overall direction.

The editorial staff at *Texas Monthly* suggests potential story ideas to the editor, and these are discussed in an editorial meeting, but the final story selection decisions are left to the editor-in-chief. As one editorial staff member stated,

> one person [controls]…what stories we're going to do, what month they're going to run, and who's going to write them, and fundamentally the approach that's

> going to be used – that's all one person….It's very much the reflection of one person's taste and one person's selection.

That selection is affected by the options offered to the editor by the staff, as well as by his own imagination for relevant and appropriate ideas. Another interviewee noted that "this magazine *is* Evan [the current editor-in-chief]." This singularity of approach was supported by the Emmis executive interviewed, who argued that Emmis's city/regional magazines are all shaped according to local preferences and leadership:

> [A]ll of our magazines…operate really independently. The people in that market have a greater vote than we do…we're smart enough to understand that they know more about the market than we do. So…the magazine really reflects the sensibility of the editor and his staff.

The editor-in-chief is apparently permitted to follow his own vision for the magazine and shape its content, as long as the owners of the magazine remain satisfied with the results. However, the editor's control is not exclusive of any influence from the owners; the owners do still "have a…vote," even if apparently less substantial, in the formation of the magazine's content and the determination of its overall direction.

Furthermore, the magazine's editorial content is said to be defended strictly against influence from the advertising sales division of the magazine. In other words, the staff states that the editorial content is not deliberately shaped in significant ways to attract or retain desirable audiences that would be of interest to advertisers. In fact, as one respondent from the business staff of the magazine described, editorial content may even offend existing advertisers, and the magazine accepts that occasional challenge:

> If you look at the barbecue issue…whoa, did we have some mad advertisers. Cooper's [restaurant]…was furious that we said that his brisket was dry....We just had to say, 'Listen, our readers read our magazine because our editorial [does] whatever they want.' If you want the readership, you have to deal with that.

The independence of editorial content from advertising influence is seen here not only as a defense of the magazine's journalistic credibility, but also as a concomitant defense of the magazine's readership: if the magazine were to cross this ethical line, it could potentially affect circulation, as readers declined to purchase a magazine that did not present a true picture of the topics it covered.

A shifting barrier between editorial and advertising? There has been one change in the advertising/editorial relationship at *Texas Monthly* in recent years. An interviewee on the business side of the magazine noted that the magazine's editorial staff now provides the advertising sales teams with an editorial calendar, which reflects the major upcoming topics in the magazine; however, the previous two editors-in-chief would not reveal even this limited information. The current editor, Evan Smith, is also said to be more willing to interact with the advertising and business staff, but whether this attitude is the result of personal preference or of business pressures from Emmis is unclear:

> Evan is a little more open to telling advertising and marketing what's coming…Emmis wants us to make more money…because it's a corporation, and that's what they're all about, and we're making a lot more money [now]….advertising in no way influences editorial, but [Evan] sees an

> opportunity…[If the editorial staff is] doing something, say, on private schools, and we can use that to sell advertising around it as long as no one influences anyone, then it's fine.

These responses together suggest that although the editorial content of *Texas Monthly* is not explicitly manipulated in specific ways to flatter advertisers, the magazine does consider how its editorial content might integrate seamlessly with complementary advertising. This is a rather more nuanced view of the relationship between a magazine and its advertisers than that which McChesney describes in the literature review, above, in which content was deliberately altered to please advertisers. However, the use of the editorial calendar by advertising representatives at *Texas Monthly* does reflect the intertwined interests of the editorial and business staff with those of the magazine's owners and advertisers.

How is Texan identity defined by those who affect the magazine's content?

The primacy of a good story. In composing the content of the magazine, the editorial staff and the editor-in-chief all argue that their primary consideration is not a rigid view of Texas identity or of Texas as a place, but rather a more literary concern with writing powerful stories. Interestingly, these criteria for a topic's appeal as a gripping *narrative* were generally mentioned during my interviews well before a criterion of "Texas relevance" for a specific topic:

> I want a lot of ambition behind the story and the narrative sweep…I want to find a big rather than a small constituency. I want it to be read by the maximum number

> of people…I ask the writers to come to me, not with small ideas, but with big ideas. We try to publish as many big stories, big ideas, with big impact and with big constituencies as possible.

Other editorial staff members at the magazine second the primacy of this "story" criterion, and describe how they learned what a true *Texas Monthly* story looks like:

> [At first] I thought every idea I had was a good idea…it seemed like anything that had to do with Texas…People around here are fond of saying, 'It's a subject, not a story idea.'…There are a lot of subjects, but…finding stories that have narratives…it takes a while to figure that out.

For the editorial staff, the best *Texas Monthly* stories are also those with "tension… color…detail, and anecdotes. All of these things that make you…go, 'Wow!' or, as we say around here, the 'Oh, shit!' factor." In other words, stories must also entice readers for their novelty, potential for amazement, and sheer enjoyment capability as *stories*, not just as items with a vague sense of connection to Texas in some way. These are also crucial criteria in defining appropriate stories to be covered in *Texas Monthly*, along with the desire to engage a "big constituency" of potential readers for the story.

Perpetuating and educating about the Texas myth. While those story/narrative criteria seemed to be primary considerations, editorial staff members also described the difficulty of defining what "Texas" and "Texas identity" might mean, and how those concepts could be applied in the magazine. The editor-in-chief's concept of Texas and Texan identity is clearly influential among the staff and was echoed in other interviews.

Specifically, the current editor, Evan Smith, argues that today's Texas and today's Texans are fundamentally different from those in the past, especially following the influx of new residents to the state with its economic growth. Therefore, the magazine that represents them requires a new approach, different from its style in its early years, when, as one staff member noted,

> probably more than 98 percent of…readers had been born in Texas and grew up here…and went back several generations. They got the references…[Today] readers [are] now maybe more like 7 in 10 are natives, and 3 in 10 are…from someplace else. So for them, Texas is not a 'state of mind,' as the old saying went. It's a state…You have to do a magazine for the people who've been here for five generations and for the people who have been here for five minutes.

According to this perspective, the "new Texans" are fundamentally different, at least from the view of *Texas Monthly*; they have less investment in the magazine's "references" to the state's past and to its standard, oft-repeated tales. Instead, this group of non-natives will require a different approach from the magazine that accommodates their "five minutes" in the state by offering a mix of content that can appeal to them. At the same time, however, the 70 percent of readers who are native Texans, and for whom those standard Texan tales do still possess relevance and interest, cannot be alienated, lest their subscriptions be lost. Therefore, the magazine must, according to this view, walk a fine line in its content to satisfy the needs and interests of both "old" and "new" Texans.

Moreover, the magazine's staff also has to consider the geographic reality of fulfilling the tastes of a widely dispersed statewide audience, according to another

editorial staff member: "What we sell has to at least attempt to transcend region a little bit. You can't be too Houston all the time, or too Dallas all the time, but you can sometimes be those things….There's a little bit of universality to [the stories]." In a contrast to city newspapers and magazines, *Texas Monthly* has to strike a balance between appealing to readers across the state and yet also covering specific stories that happened in specific Texas locales. Therefore, the stories that are selected must represent something bigger or, as one respondent said, "a commonality of interests" that the staff must assume to exist across the state among both "old" and "new" Texans.

The components of that "commonality of interests," however, seemed to be more often assumed to be widely known than it was stated explicitly. Sometimes, the "universality" and "commonality" seemed based on the "Texas myth" that many of the interviewees mentioned. The "Texas myth" is also mentioned in the magazine's mission statement, posted on its Web site: "We cover politics, business, sports, food, music, the arts, the Texas myth, and anything else relevant to life in Texas today" (Texas Monthly, 2007a). This Texas myth seems to consist of legendary Texas stories and characters who have figured in a longtime definition of the state in the public imaginary, as well as in the formation of a supposedly unified "Texas identity" – that identity that the "old Texans" would allegedly natively understand by virtue of their birthright in the state. However, when asked how this "Texas myth" applied to the editorial content of the magazine, one editorial staff member stated that

> We put the Alamo on the cover; we put the King Ranch on the cover…These are part of the Texas myth…Those are certain…not rules, but touchstones,

> that…we're kind of limited by…It's just part of playing the game of *Texas Monthly*. In California, you have to put the ocean on the cover, and in New York, you have to put the Empire State Building on the cover. That's just part of who we are. All we can do is try to expand the myth....

Apparently, the components of the Texas myth that both are repeated and limiting for the magazine are those stories that embody "Texan" characteristics, like the fight for freedom at the Alamo and the pioneer ranching spirit of the King Ranch; these locales also have remarkable human stories woven around them that would likely satisfy the "story" criterion discussed above. Interestingly, both of the stories mentioned do tie into specific locations, geographic markers of the Texan characteristics they are said to represent. The Alamo and the King Ranch both represent "Texan" characteristics and physically embody good stories. Additionally, their accessibility as geographic locations serves both journalists and tourists well, making them attractive topics for *Texas Monthly* stories for their ease of coverage and for their additional angle as possible travel destinations. It is likely that for all of these reasons, these "mythic" tales are repeated within *Texas Monthly*'s content over the years.

These "touchstones" of Texan identity, like the Alamo, are seen as representing not only stories that are powerful for the Texan readership of the magazine, but also as tools for "educating" the more recently established Texans mentioned by the editor-in-chief. This goal of education for Texas newcomers is also a part of the magazine's mission statement:

> *Texas Monthly* has always taken as its premise that Texas began as a distinctive place and remains so.…For the natives, *Texas Monthly* functions as a reminder of what once was, a record of their proud heritage. For the transplants, *Texas Monthly* is part textbook and part guidebook, a journalistic road map of the state, its history, and its people. (Texas Monthly, 2007a)

One editorial staff member commented that the magazine should perform this educational role of manifesting "Texas" and "Texan identity" for its readers: "I've always thought the magazine should teach the newcomers what Texas is…just by saying, 'We know what it is; you'd better learn it…If you want to know what this place is, read us.'" The magazine possesses a unique authority to define Texas and Texan identity for its readers, and its editorial staff is conscious of this possible impact of its content on the audience. However, a comprehension of these "Texas myth" components is seen as a necessary part of the full induction into "Texanness" that newcomers should undergo. Therefore, the magazine perpetuates those stories for its readers, bringing them into what one staff member called the "connective tissue" of Texan identity, while also relying on tried-and-true "good stories" that are easy for the staff to cover, especially given their repeated experience with these topics. Again, however, the exact nature of the assumed "connective tissue" was left relatively vague in these interviews, beyond the fact that these mythic elements definitely played an important role as "just part of who we are."

Whether the mythical elements of Texan identity possess any relevance or interest for the contemporary *Texas Monthly* audience, however, is a different question. Readers' interest in those mythical topics is not necessarily assured, particularly as the magazine's

audience changes from "native Texans" to newcomers, and as the state's other demographics shift. For example, the staff has sometimes been surprised by the failure of "Texas myth" covers to sell well. One editorial staff member cited covers featuring the classic Texas stories of Willie Nelson and the Alamo as surprising sales failures:

> Sometimes we're just amazed when they don't sell...The whole thing is a mystery to me. If you put the Alamo on the cover, it sells 35,000 copies, and if you put Matthew McConaughey on the cover, it sells 40,000. Does that mean Matthew McConaughey is more popular than the Alamo?...That's a mystery that we talk about here.

This example seems to reflect the challenge faced by *Texas Monthly* in balancing the stories that might have defined a mythic Texas identity in the past with those that might hold more relevance and interest for today's Texas audience. Another editorial staff member noted that the desire to include celebrities to boost audience interest had in the past negatively affected the magazine's adherence to representing Texans first, and felt that this editorial choice promoted major national celebrities in lieu of "authentic" Texans:

> There was a joke…that if you switched planes at DFW [Dallas-Fort Worth] airport, that *Texas Monthly* would put you on the cover like you were a big celebrity.…There was a bit of…celebrity pandering, but I think that Texas knows who's a Texan and who's not a Texan…you can have bona fide [Texan] celebrities, and then there are national celebrities.

It seems again that the purported Texan connective tissue is easily recognizable and well-known among the Texan public; therefore, defining who is "a Texan and who's not a Texan" should apparently be simple and automatic. Yet this recognition of fellow Texan-identity holders is presumed, and the actual nature of Texan attributes is not explored.

Audience and diversity. In their discussion of celebrities, moreover, these responses also point to a further challenge in creating a Texan identity within the magazine that responds not only to changing tastes and interests among the audience, but also to the changing demographics of the audience itself. When asked whom they envision as the audience for the magazine, the editorial and business staff members gave disparate answers. Among the editorial staff, there was an acknowledgement of the "new/old Texan" dichotomy often discussed by the editor-in-chief, but the nuances of the readership's characteristics were also described. In particular, the editorial staff stated concerns regarding the lack of racial and ethnic diversity among the magazine's readership, and recognized the problematic nature of this homogenous readership in an increasingly heterogeneous state. Today's readership is recognized to be far more diverse, and "…nothing at all like the traditional audience of this magazine…[T]o continue for another 30 years, you have to reach down into those groups of folks who've not been reading *Texas Monthly*." Another editorial staff member noted that the audience simply could not be the primary consideration in coming up with story ideas and writing stories, because

> if you live in a place like Texas and you just think about your audience, you're screwed. Our audience…is upper middle class, white, urban dwellers. If that's all

> we think about…then we're really limiting ourselves. We do think about our audience sometimes but me, as a writer, I never do.

For this staff member, the major criterion for a good story was, again, its narrative strength, whether it had the power to hold a reader in its thrall.

Another editorial staff member, though, was disheartened by the magazine's lack of appeal to minority and non-urban audiences, and its characterization of Texans as adhering to a Texan identity assumed universal by the Austin-based editorial staff. One recent article symbolized the possible contemporary Texan identities in the form of the target markets for retailers Cabela's and Whole Foods, and dichotomized Texans into those groups. However, this dichotomy is not entirely realistic, and is also ethnically exclusive:

> In real life, lots of Texans go to both places, participate in both lifestyles. We are not neatly divided…The Latinos in South Texas don't patronize either store or either lifestyle…[The story] didn't even mention that demographic: West Austin is Texas because that's what [the author] knows of Texas.

Other editorial staff, though, were pleased with what they perceived to be increasing ethnic and geographic diversity in the magazine, following the addition of Cecilia Ballí, a Rio Grande Valley-based freelance writer, to the magazine's staff.

> We've never had that voice before…Cecilia's voice, from a border person, was a big change…[Our] critics…think that we're this stupid, silly, white bread piece of shit. I don't disagree that it's, well, it's hard in journalism. This has been journalism's little cross to bear. Everyone's been trying to diversify for years.

While working toward the goal of increasing the minority and geographic representation in the magazine, most of the editorial staff suggested they should still primarily consider the role of a "good story" in choosing topics for the magazine: "I know as a writer you want to connect with the reader, but I don't think, 'Well, okay, 30 percent middle-class Anglo, 20 percent…' You just don't think like that. You just want to write the best story you can to another human being, basically."

Over time, then, rather than rapidly, the magazine hopes to diversify its content and seek out this broader audience for its "good stories," beyond its currently white and urban readership, as the editor-in-chief described:

> Our masthead looks nothing like Hispanic Texas.…[but] trying to get the magazine to be more reflective of the state's population…is like trying to drive a school bus. If you turn it too quickly, it will tip over…We can't turn this magazine overnight into *Tejas Monthly*…[but] we can deliberately and slowly get ourselves to a place where the magazine looks more like Texas.

This purported gradual alteration of content to reflect a more diversified audience, however, was not supported by the content analysis portion of this study. Of the sampled feature stories from 1990 to 2007, for example, only about 6 percent consisted of representations of Hispanic individuals, and many of those were in stereotypical roles. Furthermore, the pre-/post-Emmis acquisition comparisons, the Curtis/Smith editorial leadership comparison, and the comparison of possible changes during Smith's own leadership all fail to indicate any such statistically significant or even slight increase in representations of "Hispanic Texas" in the editorial content of the magazine. The

explanation for this phenomenon, seemingly in opposition to the stated editorial goals described by the magazine's editorial staff, may lie with the larger business concerns of the magazine.

Has *Texas Monthly*'s acquisition by Emmis shaped the representation of Texan identity in the magazine?

The advertising perspective on the magazine's audience. When staff members on the advertising side of the magazine were asked about their perceptions of the magazine's audience, their responses largely cited quantitative research on the magazine's circulation. For example, one business staff member cited the Mediamark Research circulation statistics for the magazine, and its breakdown of the magazine's readership by various demographic characteristics, including age, income, ethnicity, and so on. However, this same staff member noted the difficulty of analyzing these data due to their relatively small sample size – about 600 readers – and thus the challenge of gathering a full picture of the magazine's audience. As this interviewee described,

> it's hard to track a trend.…The magazine is becoming more inclusive, but I don't know if people know that on the outside…the makeup of the magazine is basically what it was ten years ago. The Hispanic percentage [of the readership] has gone up, but [maybe] because the Hispanic population has gone up.

In other words, not only is it difficult to know exactly who is reading the magazine, in terms of ethnicity, but with these limited readership data, it is also difficult to ascertain

whether the editorial content – even if and when it may present a broader view of Texas identity – ever reaches a more diverse audience.

As noted in the content analysis presented earlier, the advertising in the magazine, whose content is determined by advertisers themselves, certainly does not appear to reflect any attempt to reach a more diverse audience. The picture of "Texans" gleaned from *Texas Monthly*'s advertising is almost uniformly white. As one business staff member observed, "I definitely think our demographic comes out in the magazine. Definitely Anglo-American if you had to guess, just from looking at the pictures." The advertising not only reflects the mostly white audience, but also provides an image of a very white Texas for that white audience. Advertisers' desire to appeal to a wealthier audience likely affects these representations in the advertising. Another staff member noted that at least two genres of advertising in the magazine, education and healthcare, did seem to represent a more diverse approach:

> They want the readers to know that everybody is welcome here: white, brown, black, Asian, everything….You'll look at them and [say,] 'Well, they managed to get everybody in that ad.'…[and in] the healthcare ads, to show that all kinds of people come to our hospital, and not just white people.

It seems that the advertisers in *Texas Monthly*, excepting perhaps some educational and healthcare institutions, generally are not concerned with representing a broad view of Texan identity in their advertising's content. Instead, the appearance of a more diverse group of models or individuals in this magazine's advertising seems dependent upon the utility of that representation for that particular industry. For most businesses advertising

in *Texas Monthly*, the need to reach a wealthy audience (which will probably also happen to be white, given Texas's state demographics) appears to supersede any need to present the appearance of valuing diversity within their organizations.

Naturally, advertisers are also primarily interested in reaching potential customers for their products and services. Therefore, the type of audience represented by the *Texas Monthly* readership is highly attractive to them, especially for their relative wealth. The Emmis executive I interviewed described the demographics of the company's ideal city magazine readership: "highly educated, middle-upper income, affluent, active, civic-minded: this same kind of reader that *Texas Monthly* attracts." One advertising campaign, by San Antonio-based Frost Bank, was seen to particularly target this audience, according to a business staff member. The campaign consisted of the restoration and printing of historic maps of Texas, which were then inserted into issues of *Texas Monthly*. This campaign was described by the staff member as causing its viewers to believe that:

> 'Frost Bank…really [has] pride in our state…so we're going to support them.'…[Frost Bank] cater[s] to the seven-figure person…They want the aging baby boomers…getting their parents' oil money...who feel like Texas and America are being lost, and hopefully they can find 'it' by staying with this bank. [To feel that if they support this bank,] then everything will be okay, and go back to the way it used to be.

This particular response elicits a very specific image of what the staff saw as Frost Bank's ideal customer, and reveals much about the audience that some advertisers may imagine as reading *Texas Monthly*. This individual is wealthy, has long-term ties to

Texas, and has a sentimental attachment to a version of Texan identity that they seek to perpetuate – and that they may prefer over the direction of present-day Texas. This imagined target market is assigned not only valuable demographic characteristics, but also psychographic characteristics that link their values to the values imagined to be expressed by this particular publication, and perhaps to those values thought to be part of the "Texas myth."

One editorial staff member responds to the targeting of this wealthy, urban audience for the magazine by arguing that this preference has "dumbed down" the magazine's content, reducing its substantive coverage of political and social issues. Although this study's content analysis did not show a decline in the quantity of the magazine's political coverage, this interview response suggests a more nuanced view of its approach to politics that might not have been easily captured by the content analysis. This respondent suggested that over time, the magazine's political coverage has prioritized wealthy readers' interests and sought to maintain their pleasure in reading *Texas Monthly*, regardless of political or economic reality. Therefore, the quality, if not the quantity, of political coverage may differ today from in *Texas Monthly*'s past,

> [because of] 'improving their circulation list,' [meaning] you no longer wanted subscribers in questionable zip codes…When the oil bust hit…[we had] one editorial meeting where the discussion was, 'The economy is going down. We have to look for bright spots…What are we going to write about?' Now, I think a *Texas* magazine would say, 'The economy is going to hell! We hate it!' But [a

> magazine] under business pressure [wrote]…about the bright future of pawn shops. So…there's the business side dictating editorial content.

This is not the type of editorial/advertising conflict typically imagined at magazines, in which content is explicitly changed to make an advertiser happy. However, this situation might perhaps represent a subtler instance in which the assumed values of the target audience for the magazine's advertisers shaped the coverage of a major issue in the magazine's content. The magazine could have explored in detail the causes and consequences of the state's imminent economic downturn and of the financial losses many wealthy readers would incur. Instead, the staff produced a cheery and likely superficial story on a tangentially related topic to avoid distressing readers who would have been displeased or depressed by substantial coverage of a personally painful topic. The desire to retain an economically valuable readership might have resulted in a less critical view of this significant statewide concern, and prompted a softer approach to the subject.

Another business staff member described the significance of maintaining a certain readership to bring in advertising, and the recognition that such a readership expected particular kinds of editorial content:

> This is advertising; this is what we're all about….I don't want to say that we don't care about the readers, but we know if we try too far off the track [in the magazine's editorial content], that…the advertisers just won't be there to support [it]…It's really kind of the advertisers' decision whether they think *Texas Monthly* reaches the audience they're looking for.

This response typifies the cautious balance that all of the staff members interviewed tried to express: between the need to maintain editorial independence from business concerns, and the need to maintain an advertising-friendly readership through editorial content with appeal to that group. For the business side of the magazine, the sense of Texan identity presented in the magazine seems consequential only inasmuch as it serves to attract and sustain the type of audience that will appeal to advertisers.

The effects of Emmis' financial goals on the magazine's Texas identity. When asked directly about the types of financial changes that were made at *Texas Monthly* following its acquisition, the Emmis executive I interviewed stated that no cutbacks had been made to spending on editorial content: "Our edit budget has either remained flat or gone up every year. We've never cut our budgets because…if you don't have the readers, and you don't have an engaged group [of writers], your advertising…is not going to work long term." If no changes had been made to the magazine's investment in editorial content, then how did the magazine also "double its cash flow in three years," as this respondent also stated? The executive stated that the primary financial changes brought about at *Texas Monthly* by Emmis were in other areas, in addition to the benefits brought by "good economic times" after 1998. First, the magazine was able to utilize techniques found successful to boost advertising in other Emmis-owned city/regional magazines, such as using more special advertising sections and sponsoring events. Second, the magazine was able to call upon economies of scale by reducing "back office" costs, such as cutting printing costs by joining forces with other Emmis publications.

The third and most interesting factor for the purposes of this study, however, was the concept of "discipline" that Emmis brought to *Texas Monthly* and its editorial content choices. The Emmis executive describes this as follows:

> When you have a private owner…it's very easy to let the journalistic quality and other virtues of a magazine take over…'I want this particular writer, and if he wants $50,000 for a story, then we'll pay it,' because part of it is reputation. So…do I want to give up my profits for that? And it's easy for individual owners to say, 'Yes, my ego is more powerful than my need for money.'…[Emmis provides] the discipline that, 'Here's the goal; here's a budgeting process…We're wasting money here.'

This response seems to suggest that the magazine may be somewhat restricted financially as a result of its acquisition, in ways that might affect its potential to attract the highest quality of journalistic work, or at least may limit its options to work by journalists whose work is less expensive. This response also implies that the satisfaction of an individual private owner's "ego" is the same as aspiring to include high-quality journalistic work in the magazine, which doesn't seem an entirely fair assumption. The overall outcome of this perspective for the magazine's representation of Texas, then, may be that individual writers of lesser quality (or at least of smaller paychecks) are selected to produce the work in the magazine, and that profits are a higher priority than building a renowned journalistic reputation.

Despite this financial restriction, the Emmis executive still feels that the magazine produces quality journalism. When asked whether it seemed that the magazine included

less investigative or long-form journalism than in the past (a characteristic not included in the content analysis portion of this study), the Emmis executive responded that the content of the magazine was largely dependent on the editor-in-chief's "sensibility," and that in comparison to the company's other city/regional magazines, *Texas Monthly*'s journalism was still superior: "There is much more of that kind of journalism in Texas...[There is] some [service journalism] in *Texas Monthly*, but mostly either narrative or long narrative pieces. That's kind of their niche and that's sort of what they're known for." Clearly, the Emmis perspective is that they have brought financial success and discipline to a magazine that still produces quality journalism, and that suits advertisers' and the audience's needs. According to the Emmis executive, the purpose of *Texas Monthly* is

> entertainment value and…to surprise our readers…If it's a source of information for them, it's enjoyable…well written, easy to read, and enjoyable to read, and they also learn about where they live, and they can act on it. They can go to that river or that restaurant…[or help] a certain charitable cause, or [attend] a certain event. It just enriches their lives.

At the same time that *Texas Monthly* provides that information and enjoyment to readers, it also serves as a brand name that can be utilized by Emmis for other purposes. When asked about the future of the magazine, the executive mentioned, among other goals, using it as "the centerpiece of a regional publishing company…We've looked at other ancillary businesses that we might buy that are related."

A business staff member at the magazine also noted the potential of the *Texas Monthly* name to enhance other types of business, and that this had been suggested by Emmis following the magazine's acquisition. Specifically, the magazine has begun publishing other "branded products," like special shopping issues for selected cities that feature stores and products available in Texas' urban centers. These issues are available occasionally on newsstands, but not with paid subscriptions. The magazine also created a special series of newsstand-only issues called "How to Be Texan," which include information deemed fundamental to "being" Texan. Adopting the Texan identity, according to these special issues, appears to include the wearing of specific clothes and the visiting of specific places, conveniently featured in these publications. These related publications all fall under the "branded products" heading at the magazine, and include work by its regular staff members, in addition to specially solicited advertising:

> [Emmis] thought it would be very good for our revenue…to make these…They say, 'Come on, you guys have been *Texas Monthly* for 30 years. You are the magazine of Texas. You should use that brand to build extensions and use what you've got.'

Based upon these responses, it seems clear that the *Texas Monthly* image and presentation of Texas are seen by Emmis to serve much larger purposes than merely information and entertainment; they also are seen as possessing potential as brands in and of themselves that can promote related products. This perspective on the magazine's role seems somewhat different from the goal of informing audiences about the state that is described in the magazine's own mission statement, in its role as a "textbook" and "guidebook."

The Emmis perspective places *Texas Monthly* at the core of a larger business venture, in which the magazine's asserted knowledge of and authority over Texan identity can lend credibility to a variety of products that serve related functions, such as these special issues.

Other factors affecting the "Texas identity" presented in the magazine. As the magazine seems increasingly viewed as just one component of a nationwide enterprise, rather than a singular publication owned by a lone individual within Texas, other factors may begin to affect how the magazine may represent Texas identity. Among these are the loss of Texas-based staff and the irrelevance of Texas identity to advertisers.

As one editorial staff member noted, "Yankees [are now] the dominant influence" at *Texas Monthly*, and these outsiders can allegedly only know the state through "academic means" – meaning by learning facts about the state, rather than *feeling* it. Evidently non-native Texans are thought to have a difficult time in joining the "connective tissue" among all Texans that is assumed to exist, even by some staff members whose purported role as *Texas Monthly* staff is to aid in these non-natives' education. Therefore, these non-native staff at *Texas Monthly* may not have a heartfelt understanding of "Texanness," whatever that might exactly be. Additionally, a significant issue for some observers of the magazine is that its current editor-in-chief, Evan Smith, is not a native Texan, though he has been involved with *Texas Monthly* since 1991. Smith himself describes this experience as follows:

> It's kind of like being Roger Maris; you always have an asterisk next to your name no matter how long you're here. I spent a lot of time the first few years I was here on the road seeing Texas…I don't pretend to know the state as well as a native…But I've done everything I possibly can…to get as much about Texas as I possibly can from the experience of living here.

Smith argues that his experience of touring Texas allows him to make good decisions about representing the state in the magazine he leads. He also argues that his outsider perspective can positively affect the magazine's ability to reach a broad constituency, fitting his view of the "new" and "old" Texans described above, because he can ask of stories, "Does anyone care…outside of people whose great-great-great grandmother was at San Jacinto? I get to stand in for the non-Texans out there in the universe of potential readers, [in] the way the native Texans [on the staff] get to stand in for the native Texans." As a result of his unique position, Smith believes he is capable of balancing these two audiences' demands for different types of editorial content. He feels that he is able to guide the staff in creating a modernized and nuanced version of Texan identity that can incorporate Texans of all vintages. However, again, the nature of this revised Texan identity is left largely undefined; the characteristics of this modern Texan are assumed, not made explicit.

Other editorial staff members disagree with Smith's attempt to balance the presumed old and new versions of Texan identity. As one editorial staff member noted, Smith wants to use "younger writers who didn't grow up on ranches and didn't grow up with this Texas myth stuff," which this staff member viewed as both an effort to diversify

the editorial content of the magazine and a way of appealing to a broader audience. Another editorial staff member argued that choosing "East Coast" writers allowed the magazine to run more smoothly on an administrative level and to "make the trains run on time," as many of these writers had extensive magazine experience, and knew how to write in the correct style and on deadline. However, to this respondent, this Eastern influx did not preserve the Texas feel of the magazine: "The bulk of them were technically very adept, but I think they didn't understand the environment they were working in…I think we began to lose contact with the sort of concerns" of native Texans. The exact concerns of native Texans, and how they differ from those of non-native Texans, are not stated, but again remain mere assumptions, and also are presumed to be different.

Moreover, *Texas Monthly*'s increased reliance on non-Texan writers affected its ability to support Texas magazine writers and editors as a sort of Texan magazine "farm league," a role and legacy that many of its early staff members valued. In its early days as an independent magazine, according to one respondent, the magazine was able to nurture and provide opportunities to Texan writers who had few other options for magazine writing within the state. However, as the magazine sought to increase its profits, writers from outside Texas, where magazine writing was a more widely available profession, became prominent and technically efficient components of the magazine's staff. Therefore, Texan writers did not have the opportunity to take those jobs and develop a magazine that represented their home state, according to this respondent. Overall, it seems that the magazine's administrative preferences, as it shifted from a unique, privately run publication toward a more corporate paradigm, could have had long-lasting

effects on the abilities of Texas writers to gain a voice in the major Texas magazine available to them. As a result, the potential for native Texans to write about Texas and gain a larger audience for their work was potentially diminished as a result of *Texas Monthly*'s corporate acquisition.

Of course, the logical response to this, on Emmis' behalf, is that they are not in the business of fostering a lively Texas literary scene, nor in the business of mentoring aspiring Texan authors. Instead, they are in the business of selling advertising in an informative and enjoyable publication, as the Emmis executive described. Notably, the "Texanness" of *Texas Monthly* is not even especially significant to its advertisers. Numerous respondents noted the need for the magazine to appeal to nationwide businesses, not only Texas advertisers, in order to create a sustainable business model. The magazine's content must therefore be comprehensible, and clearly marketable, to people outside of Texas who don't necessarily identify with the "Texanness" promoted within the magazine, but who can recognize in its content the universal qualities of an advertising-friendly publication that attracts a valuable readership.

As one editorial staff member described, part of the reason for moving away from Texas-based authors and photographers at one point in the magazine's history was exactly this: to establish credibility as a valuable publication for advertisers outside the state:

> [I was told,] "Look, we have to sell ads in New York…if you tell [them], 'We have…some Texas photographer,' they don't know who that is. If you tell them, 'We have Richard Avedon…' they know."…In order to get national ads, [the

> magazine] had to please New York's view of what Texas was, or hire non-Texans like Avedon who have a national reputation.

In other words, the idea of Texas and Texan identity produced in the magazine had to respond to the demands of national advertisers if it wished to be financially successful. As a magazine seeking to build a national reputation for both journalism and advertising success, this shift in its content was crucial. Even today, as a business staff member described, the magazine must still compete for national advertisers' budgets: "We're a magazine just for Texas, but we really compete on the national level…We have nine National Magazine Awards, and…we're really competing with the big magazines for ad dollars."

Texas Monthly faces competition not only with the few other Texas magazines for Texas readers, a reputation for good Texan journalism, and a share of Texas businesses' advertising dollars – but also competes with national magazines for all of these on the national level. The magazine's staff appears to be acutely aware of its place on the national scene, and the connection between the national advertisers and the sense of Texas identity in the magazine seems tenuous. For example, Macy's, a major department store advertising in *Texas Monthly*, likely has no more concern for how Texas is presented in that magazine than the company does for how Cincinnati is presented in *Cincinnati* magazine, in which it might also advertise. The relevant factor for Macy's is not the "sense of place" in these localized publications, but rather the specific demographic characteristics of each publication's readership, and the likelihood that Macy's advertising will capture their attention in that medium. National advertisers likely

care little about the information and ideas being presented to Texans about their state in *Texas Monthly*. Presumably, like Emmis itself, these advertisers are primarily in business for the purpose of profit, not for "journalistic quality and other virtues of a magazine," such as its representation of Texas and Texan identity.

Even Texas-based advertisers, surprisingly, do not care much about the Texan identity shown in the magazine where they have paid to place their ads. When asked why they selected *Texas Monthly* for their advertising, all three of the representatives of the Texas businesses whom I interviewed responded first with the demographic characteristics of the audience they wished to reach, not with any desire to create a "Texan feeling" around their products. For example, when asked why the business advertised in *Texas Monthly*, one businessperson stated that

> 95 percent of our print media [budget]…is in *Texas Monthly*, because we are very happy with the people they reach…the demographics are very good…you might think [our business would] be better suited for *Robb Report, Wall Street Journal,* or other media, but *Texas Monthly* does reach that high end as well.

For this business, *Texas Monthly* was equivalent to any nationwide publication that reached a wealthy demographic. Another businessperson remarked on the desirability of reaching "higher end Texas travelers" who might be in the vicinity of the business and be interested in their products.

The second most frequently cited reason among these Texas-based advertisers for choosing *Texas Monthly* was the magazine's capability to build "brand equity." In other words, the magazine's credibility as a publication and clear appeal to a "higher end"

audience served to help legitimize and add value to their own companies' brands. One small-town businessperson stated that the *Texas Monthly* ad allowed her company

> to convey that it's a high end store, and we didn't think we'd be able to get that message across just in the [small local weekly newspaper]….A lot of people saw our ad in…*Texas Monthly*. It made them think, 'Wow, it's a real store,' because a lot of stores open and go out of business within six months in [this small town].

For another business, the advertisement in *Texas Monthly* was almost beside the point; its utility lay in the fact that the magazine could be mentioned to potential customers to help establish the company's own reputation and worthiness – effectively transferring some of the luster of *Texas Monthly* to the company's own business:

> We [scan] our advertisement, and we include it in our e-mails…so [customers] can see our ad…We'll try to use it…to build brand equity. And we'll put copies of the magazine and framed copies of the advertisement in our showroom, so our customers…can see [it]….once again working on enhancing our brand image and brand name.

For this business, the value of advertising in *Texas Monthly* went far beyond individuals actually seeing the ad in the magazine itself; rather, the ad was a tool that could be used in multiple ways to help build the company's brand name and establish its products and services as appropriate for a high-end market.

As a whole, even the geographic specificity of the magazine was not a primary consideration for these advertisers. When pressed about this aspect, one businessperson did say that the magazine's Texan specialization did help establish "that we're not a

company from up north or out in California trying to sell [our products] here in Texas. We're a Texas-owned company and sell [our products] to a Texas market." Another respondent whose business is exclusively in Texas noted that the magazine's Texan context was useful because if customers were considering relocating to Texas, "one of the things you're probably going to do is grab a *Texas Monthly* magazine. That is one of the main reasons we're in there." Given that a magazine of that title would appear to contain information about the state, the advertiser and his envisioned target audience member would be making a rational choice in purchasing that publication for that purpose. In general, though, these advertisers were far less interested in gaining a "Texas identity" for their products and services than they were in reaching a specific demographic, and in establishing legitimacy and value for their businesses through the medium of *Texas Monthly*.

What Remains as Texan in *Texas Monthly*?

Advertisers appear largely uninterested in the maintenance of "Texan identity" in *Texas Monthly* for their purposes. Emmis views *Texas Monthly*'s authority over Texan identity as a basis for journalistic work, but also as a valuable branding technique. The magazine's staff is seemingly unable to define clearly the meaning of a shared Texan identity, beyond assuming that it exists, that it relies on mythic Texan elements, that it differs for native and non-native Texans, and that Texans will somehow know what's Texan when they see it. Given these weak assertions of Texan identity, and given that clarifying that identity is apparently not a high priority for the magazine's staff, one

might wonder *whether* this identity actually has been constructed in the magazine, and if *Texas Monthly* does in fact present something coherent and identifiable as "Texan."

A problem for the magazine's staff seems to be that although they are unwilling to select stories merely based upon a superficial appearance of Texan relevance, they do not have a strongly defined or well-understood concept of what "Texan" might mean beyond the fact that something occurred within the state's borders. Instead, an assumption of a "commonality of interests" and of the "universality" of Texanness, along with a criterion of an intriguing narrative, together justify the collection of a group of stories into an issue every month. And even as those issues appear to maintain a relatively high and consistent proportion of politically and socially significant content within their feature stories, they have perhaps lost some of their deeper exploration of those issues. According to some interviewees, that exploration may have been sacrificed to the maintenance of a wealthy and desirable readership for advertisers, who are largely unconcerned with the publication's journalistic content or its construction of Texas.

The magazine does not seek to attract an audience that represents the full range of Texas residents, instead concentrating on drawing an affluent, urban audience. Its staff argues that they are attempting to diversify the magazine's content so that their audience may be informed about the variety of people and issues in the state. The results of this study's content analysis do not support that statement, demonstrating instead a strong focus especially on white people in the magazine's content and advertising, and somewhat stereotypical tendencies in the magazine's coverage of non-white individuals. It is possible that a different analytic approach might find evidence for this shift in

content. However, whatever Texan identity exists within the magazine, it does not appear in this analysis to have managed to include the diversity of Texas's population, despite interview responses to the contrary.

Finally, the magazine's corporate owners state that they allow the Texas-based staff to make editorial decisions, though with increased financial "discipline," and the staff reports increased pressure to generate profit through advertising that complements editorial content and through "branded products." The nature of Texan identity in the magazine appears also to be less relevant to these corporate owners, as it is to the magazine's advertisers. As a whole, these interviews suggest that for the magazine's staff, Texan identity is not a common foundation or a coherently constructed vision of what Texans are all about. There is no fixed sense of "Texanness" that is utilized to determine the magazine's content and deepen its exploration of issues significant to the state. Rather, the vagueness of the "Texan identity" shared by those interviewed instead provides a means for attracting a demographic of readers – old Texans, new Texans, but preferably wealthy Texans – that is attractive to advertisers, thereby providing the magazine with financial subsistence.

The resulting malleability of Texan identity within the magazine may be its ultimate asset, because without stating and maintaining a fixed meaning for the concept, the magazine's content can be more flexibly determined, and can be shaped as necessary to attract and preserve the desired audience. The consistency of the magazine's content over time is likely the result *not* of the staff's persistent reference to a long-held, shared vision of Texan identity – but rather to a long-held, shared understanding of the need to

maintain the desired audience for the magazine. Among editorial staff members, though they may try not to "think about the audience," this knowledge is implicit; among business staff members and advertisers, the goal of appealing to a specific audience is the focus of every workday.

Yet the malleability of Texan identity within *Texas Monthly* perhaps does not serve its readers best, from a normative perspective on its journalistic functions, particularly in its coverage of politics. The next chapter, through analyzing *Texas Monthly*'s coverage of George W. Bush, will provide an example of how Texan identity may be applied and altered as necessary to fit the magazine's needs, and how its political coverage is affected by this process.

Chapter 6

Constructing Texan Identity in a Political Context

Throughout the preceding chapters of this study, I have described how *Texas Monthly* constructs a sense of Texan identity in its pages. The content analysis chapter provides an overview of the magazine's approach to "Texan identity" in the magazine, and notes in particular that the magazine's frequent political stories are often presented through "personality" profiles, rather than broader discussions of political issues. This tendency is somewhat explained by insights offered by the interviews with the magazine's staff, in which the desire to maintain the magazine's commercial appeal was found to be a significant factor in its construction. Many readers likely find a personalized approach to political topics to be more intriguing than wide-ranging discussions of these issues. The editor-in-chief, editorial staff, and business staff – along with the magazine's corporate owners and advertisers – all have an interest in and sensitivity to the need to present a positive and engaging image of Texan identity in the magazine to maintain its readership and business value.

Therefore, this need to maintain a positive sense of Texan identity may also manifest itself in the magazine's coverage of politics. As discussed in the previous chapter, some staff members at the magazine feel that rather than engaging in in-depth critique, the magazine's political coverage has instead prioritized the desires of its wealthy audience, who are perceived to wish to avoid critical coverage of Texas' political and social issues. In this situation, political figures of statewide and national significance

may not be covered in ways that encourage critique and scrutiny. Within *Texas Monthly*, the prime example of this phenomenon is the magazine's coverage of former Texas governor and current President George W. Bush.

This chapter, then, will explore how *Texas Monthly* has covered Bush throughout his political career, and will focus on the third research question of this study: "How does the magazine's coverage of President George W. Bush reflect the application of Texan identity in a political context?" The primary concern of this chapter is not to determine whether the magazine generally portrays Bush positively or negatively, but rather to examine how the magazine accommodates the need to preserve an appealing (if still vague) image of Texan identity in its political coverage – even when someone so strongly identified as Texan has lost some public regard.

This textual analysis of the 98 articles concerning Bush in the magazine from 1992 to 2007 suggests a subtle shift that occurs in these stories with regard to Bush's attributed Texan identity. In these articles, I examined the changing application of geographic identifiers to Bush throughout this period, in conjunction with his rising and falling political status. In this chapter, I will explore how *Texas Monthly* assigns Texan identity to Bush as his political status changes. If Texan identity – even as it remains a vague concept for the magazine's staff – must be preserved as something positive and valuable for the magazine's audience, then the ascription of Texan qualities to Bush may depend on his level of public esteem. Altering Bush's geographic characterization could also provide a defense for Texan identity, thereby maintaining the value of Texan identity. Further insight into coverage of Bush within the magazine allows for a

demonstration of how the need to maintain a positive sense of Texan identity both suffuses and constrains *Texas Monthly*'s political coverage.

Bush Runs for Governor: Establishing Texan Credentials

Much of the magazine's coverage of Bush during the entire period of 1992 to 2007 is merely "horse race"-style discussion of election strategy and political maneuverings. Therefore, this textual analysis focuses primarily on the more substantial articles in *Texas Monthly* that addressed Bush's personality, personal history, and their connections to his political career. A short summary of his career (at least through the end of 2007, the time period covered by this analysis) may help illustrate the territory that these articles covered during these 15 years.

George W. Bush was born in 1946 in New Haven, Connecticut, but moved with his family to Texas – specifically Midland and Odessa, in West Texas – as a child, so that his father could work in the oil industry there (Colloff, 1999, p. 106). He later attended boarding school at the Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts (Thorpe, 1999, p. 107), and graduated from Yale in 1968 ("Biography of President George W. Bush," 2008). Bush also received a Master's of Business Administration degree from Harvard Business School in 1975 ("Biography of President George W. Bush," 2008). He made an unsuccessful run for the U.S. House 19th Congressional District seat in 1978, a West Texas district including Midland and Lubbock (Hart, 1999, p. 110). Bush then worked in the oil and energy industry himself, and also owned a share of the Texas Rangers baseball

team. He eventually ran and won election to the office of governor of Texas in 1994, then was re-elected in 1998 ("Biography of President George W. Bush," 2008).

After serving two years of his second term as governor, Bush was elected president in 2000 and re-elected in 2004 ("Biography of President George W. Bush," 2008). Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Bush's approval ratings among the public soared (to a peak of nearly 90 percent approving of his performance as president), but only for a brief period. Bush's post-September 11 approval peak was the beginning of a long decline in his ratings, broken only by small increases at the start of the Iraq war in March 2003, and with the capture of Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein in December 2003. Although no one event seems clearly responsible for this decline, perhaps Bush simply had nowhere to go but down in the public's view; his administration's missteps in responding to domestic and world events likely reinforced this downward spiral. In December 2007, Bush's approval rating hovered around 35 percent (Ruggles, 2007). Finally, a November 2007 survey revealed that fully 58 percent of the American public thought Bush would be viewed from a historical perspective as a "poor," "very poor," or "the worst" president (PollingReport.com, 2008).

But in the early stages of Bush's career, prior to these dramatic incidents and his amazing rise and fall in public esteem, *Texas Monthly* had the task of exploring this individual's history and his relevance as a candidate for office. Substantial articles on Bush began to appear during the 1994 governor's race, in which he challenged incumbent Ann Richards. Bush was already vaguely known to the public through his father, President George H. W. Bush, but his gubernatorial candidacy provided a reason for the

media to familiarize the public with George W. Bush's own distinct personal history and political goals. In May 1994, *Texas Monthly* published just such a story, titled "Born to Run" (referenced as "Son of a Bush" on that month's cover, along with a cover photo of Bush).

This story provides significant background detail about Bush. However, this story seems not just to build on the public's existing knowledge of George W. Bush to complete their information about him, but also to draw some significant contrasts between Bush and his father. For the purposes of *Texas Monthly*, the most important of these contrasts appears to be the simple assertion that Bush is *Texan*, not *Eastern*. This particular opposition – between Texan and Eastern – is one that recurs throughout the magazine's coverage of Bush, and it is a significant factor in the magazine's construction of Texan identity for him. In this 1994 story, Bush's dislike of allegedly Eastern characteristics is repeatedly mentioned; in fact, he is said to have

> …a lifelong distrust of Easterners…'What angered me was the way such people at Yale felt so intellectually superior and so righteous,' he says.…Bush says that his education only made him want to get back to Texas, as he puts it, 'away from the snobs.' (Hollandsworth, 1994, p. 147)

Bush's own identification with Texas, according to this article, makes him view the people he meets during his Eastern education as elitist and arrogant, thinking that they can solve the nation's problems from their narrow perspective. Instead, Bush prefers what he calls "'Texas as a wonderful way of life,'" which the author notes is intended to refer to Bush's "own Midland childhood" in Texas (Hollandsworth, 1994, p. 147).

In concert with this derision of "Easternness," this article presents much evidence to reinforce Bush's Texan identity. He is called "a Texas celebrity," and is described as having arrived at a political meeting to "pass on his vision of Texas" (Hollandsworth, 1994, p. 147). A rally on Texas Independence Day that featured Bush, his father, and other family is "a glorious evening to be a Republican from Texas" (Hollandsworth, 1994, p. 147). Furthermore, many of the images accompanying this article portray Bush surrounded by "Texans" in cowboy hats and other Texan paraphernalia, representing Bush as one of Texas' own through association with these purportedly Texan individuals.

All of these attempts both to separate Bush from an Eastern identity and to reinforce his Texan identity serve multiple purposes. For the construction of Texan identity in the magazine as a whole, this Texan-Eastern opposition serves to distinguish Texan identity as something not just unique and valuable, but even as morally and politically superior to other geographic identities. If Texan identity is the ideal, *Texas Monthly* must also, by representing that identity, also be somehow desirable and appealing. Therefore, the magazine maintains its value to readers and advertisers, and further asserts its unique status within its special market niche.

Additionally, from Bush's perspective, his differentiation from his father's well-known identification with New England was useful as a political strategy. Adopting and asserting a Texan persona allowed Bush to divorce himself from the aura of political impotence (even "wimpiness") that had attached itself to his father in public opinion. George H.W. Bush had been plagued by assertions of elitism and even over-femininity throughout his career, even as his campaign strategists and aides attempted to construct a

more manly, assertive image for him through photo ops of "chomping on pork rinds while tossing horseshoes with the guys…[to] a country music soundtrack" (Ducat, 2004, p. 84). *Newsweek*'s October 1987 cover condemned George H.W. Bush to the eternal application of the term "wimp," with its headline "Fighting the Wimp Factor" (Ducat, 2004, p. 85).

However, by emphasizing his Texan connections at the start of his political career, George W. Bush aimed to avoid the same tribulations and construct a politically and geographically distinct persona for himself. Bush himself requests this in the article: "'All that I ask…is that for once you guys stop seeing me as the son of George Bush. This campaign is about me, no one else'" (Hollandsworth, 1994, pp. 115-116). This article seems to represent a willingness to help separate him from his father in the public's perception, especially by emphasizing a Texan-Eastern opposition and reinforcing George W. Bush's Texan identity. The article as a whole further distinguishes between father and son, as shown in its closing line: "…he was still fighting to be his own man, someone other than his father's son" (Hollandsworth, 1994, p. 152). The application of Texan identity to Bush in this early profile is mutually beneficial to the magazine and to Bush: it aids *Texas Monthly* in persuading its audience of the value of their shared Texan identity (through the Texan-Eastern opposition), while also helping Bush to construct his Texan persona (by reinforcing his assertions of Texan identity).

Considering the Presidency: Texas versus Washington, D.C.

The next substantial coverage of Bush in *Texas Monthly* occurred in 1998 and 1999, as the possibility of his presidential candidacy in 2000 arose. With that opportunity, the magazine again covered Bush in greater depth, beyond the workings of the governor's office. As might be expected, these stories repeat many of the same themes of the 1994 profile article described above. The Texan-Eastern opposition is again reinforced, with Bush's Texan identity being reasserted and confirmed by *Texas Monthly*. However, the reality that Bush might move to *Washington*, to the East Coast, suddenly adds a new level of complexity to the magazine's coverage of his opportunity. In this 1998-99 coverage, the Texan-Eastern opposition is narrowed and redefined, primarily in terms that create an opposition between ideals of Texan leadership and those purported to be held by leaders in Washington, D.C.

In July 1998, *Texas Monthly* ran another cover story on Bush, titled "President Bush?" In the lead of the story, Bob Taft, governor of Ohio from 1999 to 2007, tells Bush, "George, I hope you won't confine your ambitions to Texas. I hear there is an office in Washington, an Oval Office, that will soon be available" (Burka, 1998, p. 72). From this moment, this distinction between Texas and Washington will continue in this article and others. Bush asserts in the article (in his own words) that "his head and his heart are in Texas" (Burka, 1998, p. 72). However, he is said to be actively considering the run for the presidency, although it is also repeatedly stated that "Bush does not like Washington….'He doesn't like the scene, all the phony baloney,' said Republican consultant Mary Matalin….He makes no secret of his distaste for the chip-on-the-

shoulder hostility of the Washington press corps" (Burka, 1998, p. 104). The ethos of Washington disagrees with his asserted Texan identity. That Texan identity supposedly cannot abide the elitism and dishonesty that are part of the Washington identity, at least as it will be constructed in *Texas Monthly*, beginning with this article.

While it begins this negative construction of a Washington identity, this article also further reinforces Bush's Texan identity. The author describes Bush's travel in small-town Texas, and notes how the governor/candidate's style is shaped by his Texan identity: "He works a crowd the old-fashioned way, going through it rather than waiting for the people to come to him. He makes eye contact and holds it…His accent is thicker in rural Texas than it is in Dallas, and his comments are folksier" (Burka, 1998, p. 72). Again, this presentation of Bush plays up his assertiveness, his friendliness, and his Texanness, all apparently co-existing characteristics, which together amplify Bush's Texan identity and further differentiate him from his father. [George H.W. Bush, this article notes, is "totally depoliticized" when mentioned in the younger Bush's speeches: "Not a word is said about the Bush administration or its legacy" (Burka, 1998, p. 75).] As a whole, this article begins the process of creating a Texas-Washington opposition that will carry forward into the magazine's future coverage of Bush. It also supports the construction of a positive and strong Texan identity, which is a political asset for Bush.

With the start of the presidential race in 1999, *Texas Monthly* again provided its audience with an in-depth profile of George W. Bush – the longest piece yet in the magazine that focused specifically on his life history and personality. This article also stridently asserts Bush's Texan identity and derides a purportedly corrupt Washington

identity. This piece, titled “Who is George W. Bush?,” was published in the June 1999 issue of the magazine. The correct answer to the question posed by the title, of course, is that Bush is *Texan*, not Eastern in any way, and the article does everything possible to reconfirm that asserted identity.

The article’s subtitle seems to summarize Bush’s geographic history: “From a modest shotgun house in Odessa to the Governor’s Mansion in Austin to, perhaps, the White House in Washington, D.C.” ("Who is George W. Bush? introduction," 1999, p. 105). This brief retelling of Bush’s peregrination leaves out many significant locations in his life, including his Connecticut birthplace and his education at Andover and Yale. Instead, it emphasizes the locations that cement Bush’s claim to Texan identity at this point in his life (prior to his acquisition of his ranch in Crawford, which will be discussed more fully later in this chapter).

On the same page, a segment of this profile (which is divided into chronologically ordered portions authored by different *Texas Monthly* writers) states that “growing up in West Texas made [Bush] different from his dad” (Colloff, 1999, p. 105). In Odessa, the author states, “Housing was scarce, the work [in the oil fields] was grueling, and the weather…was hard to endure” (Colloff, 1999, p. 105). Although it’s likely that no one in the Bush family suffered the first two challenges of Odessa, George W. Bush, “far from buttoned-down New England…would grow up to be loud, loose, and earthy – a child with the rough edges of the West” (Colloff, 1999, p. 106). As a result of growing up in Midland and Odessa, both West Texas towns, the author asserts that

> For George W., Midland became the place that he would most closely identify himself with, the place that – despite ten years of schooling in the East, summers spent at the family home in Maine, and considerable time in Houston, Dallas, and Austin as an adult – he still thinks of as home. (Colloff, 1999, p. 106)

The magazine manages to reconcile Bush's time "back East" with his Texan childhood and Texan identity by citing his claim that Texas is ultimately "home" for him. On the same page is a photograph of Bush as a child, sitting on horseback and wearing a cowboy outfit, with the caption "loud, loose, and earthy." His Texan childhood and resulting claim to allegedly Texan personality characteristics is thus asserted not only through the text, but also in this photographic evidence.

The next segment of this article further advances the magazine's use of Bush to construct Texan identity as opposed to Eastern identity. Titled "Go East, Young Man," the subtitle is "Child of privilege? Sure, but he left Andover and Yale as a regular guy" (Thorpe, 1999, p. 107). This brief recognition of Bush's upper-class economic security is unusual in the magazine's coverage, which more frequently tends to mention his youth in the hardscrabble atmosphere of the West Texas oil fields. However, Bush is quickly returned to the status of "regular guy," and is also more emphatically established as a "regular" *Texan*. When he goes to Andover, his distaste for the place even takes the form of revulsion for the physical environment of the East: "he discovered that winter was cold, the trees looked funny, [and] the days were short" (Thorpe, 1999, p. 107).

Of course, one infers, Bush's standard for comparison would have been Texas, where he must have thought the physical environment superior, with "normal" trees and

warm winters. The people in the East are also discussed with distaste. Bush encounters "the insular world of the East Coast establishment," and learns to navigate it by contributing his own "frivolity," lightening the "heavy" atmosphere (Thorpe, 1999). These repeated comparisons, therefore, are able not only to boost Bush's identification with Texas, but also increase the esteem granted to Texan identity over that assigned to the East.

Finally, the segment of this article devoted to George W. Bush's time with his father's administration in Washington, D.C., narrows the Texan-Eastern opposition to one of Texas versus *Washington*. Bush's feelings toward D.C. are negative: it is, according to this article, "a city he came to loathe and still does, even as he embarks on a campaign to return there. 'He didn't like it when he was here,' says family confidante Mary Matalin...It's a culture of self-glorification, of loyalty to one's own interests above all others…" (E. Smith, 1999, p. 111). The article proceeds to describe various incidents of infighting and disloyalty that George W. Bush experienced during his father's administration, and how these experiences led him to hold a strongly negative view of how political operatives manipulate Washington. The implication, of course, is that all of Bush's experience in Texas, as a citizen and as governor, contrasted to this time in Washington, where government evidently utilizes much more corrupt methods than in unsullied Texan politics. Therefore, Bush was shocked by what he saw in Washington. There must be less "self-glorification" and selfishness in Texan politics, according to this implied construction of Texan political purity.

These statements, however, are not necessarily factually accurate; certainly Texan politics in reality suffers from self-interest and disloyalty as well, but those facts are not discussed here. Bush's view of Washington, however, bolsters a noble view of Texans and of Texan politics, and seems to assert that Texan identity is free from the desire for "self-glorification" and the other less-than-righteous motives that must taint Washington and its political proceedings. This implied construction of a virtuous Texan politics, in opposition to Washington's corruption, further suggests the value and desirability of a Texan identity over a Washington or otherwise Eastern identity, and could be seen as reinforcing the *Texas Monthly* reader's personal valuation of Texan identity.

Bush Wins the Presidency: A Texan President in *Texas Monthly*…Briefly

In March 2001, in its first feature on Bush since his inauguration that January, *Texas Monthly* again designated Bush one of the state's own, providing a four-page article specifically on his Texan-themed inaugural celebrations. The article begins with this proud first paragraph: "…dutiful Texans whooped it up all over Washington. The parties overflowed with big hair, ridiculous Western getups, and tons of barbecue, and when it was over, I kept thinking one thing: God bless Texas" (Hollandsworth, 2001, p. 146). The opposing page displays a large photo of Bush with Texas Governor Rick Perry, Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison, and then-Senator Phil Gramm, all comparing their customized cowboy boots. The boots include Texan and American symbols in their leatherwork, naturally.

This elevation of Texan identity and symbols to the national political scene, as well as the reverence this inspires in the author, together signify a new level of political achievement for Bush and for the Texan identity that has been established for him by *Texas Monthly*. This article on the inaugural festivities celebrates far more than just Bush's election: it demonstrates the capacity of Texan identity to elevate its holders to such high status and esteem among those in power. As such, at this stage in his political career, characterized by success and public regard, the magazine is happy to claim Bush as part of its construction of Texas identity, given all the possibilities and opportunities for the state that his election could represent. As long as Bush succeeds in doing positive things from his position of power, that claim to Texan identity will not be contested by *Texas Monthly*; in fact, it will be continuously reinforced within the magazine's pages.

Moreover, it is the ascent of Texan identity to the heights of power in Washington that bodes well for the nation as a whole, for Bush is seen in this article as a means by which the alleged purity and wholesomeness of Texan politics can cleanse Washington's political machinations. Bush is described as ready to give "Washington...a good dose of Texas spirit," and he and his Texan allies at the inaugural celebrations are there to "show the Beltway insiders what Texas was all about" (Hollandsworth, 2001, p. 148). Presumably, these statements insinuate that Texas has more to offer D.C. than just Texan cuisine or fashion, though exactly what might be offered is not explicitly stated. The author states that "Washington pundits had been in a snit about what might happen inside their beloved Beltway with the upcoming Lone Star occupation," and he suggests that the "new urbane Texas" has much to offer Washington, beyond just "big hair" and barbecue

(Hollandsworth, 2001, p. 148). The "Eastern news media…were eating it up," this spectacle of Texan attitude and paraphernalia; the inaugural celebrations featured quasi-Texan décor, and the author describes Washingtonians' amazement at seeing evidence of cultural sophistication among the Texans present at these events, if not in the décor (Hollandsworth, 2001, pp. 148-149).

All of these manifestations of Texan identity, brought into the Washington context, are viewed as providing hope and the potential for change in the "culture of Washington," so derided in the magazine's 1999 profile of Bush. Bush is seen here as bringing a new attitude and "spirit" to Washington, and as someone that the readers of *Texas Monthly* can be proud of and support as their "fellow Texan," ready to revolutionize that foreign and unwholesome world inside the Beltway. However, these early hopes soon take a different turn in the magazine when Bush's political fortunes change.

Crawford, Texas: One Site of Bush's "Re-Placement" in *Texas Monthly*

Over time, as described above, Bush's political career will largely decline in public esteem following this high point at his inauguration. Significantly, *Texas Monthly* responds to this failing public status by "re-placing" Bush – revoking the Texan identity that he had been so strongly assigned, and instead relocating him into another geographic identity. This "re-placement" process occurs over time, and like the decline in Bush's approval ratings, does not seem like a reaction to a specific event faced by his administration, but rather a gradual response to or reflection of the deterioration of

Bush's public regard. However, because "Texanness" perhaps seemed endangered by its association with Bush and his diminished presidency, its value and appeal was likely salvaged within *Texas Monthly* by separating him from that geographic identity.

Tracing the "re-placement" of George W. Bush in *Texas Monthly* can begin with an examination of the magazine's coverage of his ranch in Crawford, Texas. Bush purchased the 1,600-acre ranch in central Texas during the summer of 1999, and in June 2000, *Texas Monthly* printed a brief article on his acquisition and plans for a new home on the property (Patoski, 2000, p. 19). Although the article acknowledges some of the increased traffic that the Bushes' new home in Crawford will bring to the town, the Bushes are otherwise called "pretty nice people" and sound like welcome new residents (Patoski, 2000, p. 19). Another major task of this article is to clarify whether Bush's new Texan estate should be known as a "farm" or a "ranch," and a real estate agent provides the appropriate term: "I'd call it a ranch" (Patoski, 2000, p. 19). Naturally, the term "ranch" also sounds much more Texan than does "farm"; although either type of property could ostensibly be located anywhere, the "ranch" connotation of livestock and sprawling acreage simply sounds much more Texas-specific, adding to Bush's own Texan identity in the magazine.

Finally, this article assigns the town of Crawford some key attributes of rural Texas life, through both the significance of ranching and the religiosity assumed of the Texas stereotype: the town "may lack a country club, but does boast five churches" (Patoski, 2000, p. 20). This statement also contains a subtle suggestion that rural Texans do not engage in the elitism that has been presented in the magazine as part of Bush's

otherwise Eastern heritage. As a whole, this early coverage of Bush's Crawford ranch helps establish his Texan identity by not just noting his actual legal claim to property within the state, but also by further asserting Bush and Texas' unique and superior identity in opposition to Eastern identity.

Later coverage of the Crawford ranch, however, takes a markedly different turn. In November 2002, when Bush's nationwide job approval ratings were well into their long decline from their post-September 11 zenith, *Texas Monthly*'s cover featured a photo of Bush leaning on a fencepost, with the headline "The Takeover and Makeover of George W. Bush's Crawford." This headline is ambivalent in tone, but the article it references is decidedly negative about Bush's impact on Crawford, Texas. Examining the photos accompanying the article immediately reveals this negativity; the photos strongly reinforce the "takeover" aspect of the headline, and the "makeover" isn't a positive one. The first two-page spread of the story portrays Bush alone behind a solid wave of reporters, microphones, and cameras, looking like he has led an invading army into Crawford. This image represents Bush as no longer an integral part of the Texas landscape, but instead as an interloper and a destructive force desecrating the natural environment of the ranch.

The third large photograph used with this story represents Bush as equally an interloper in the social environment of Crawford. The picture is taken inside a typical small-town Texas diner, with a life-size cardboard cutout of Bush positioned near a table of customers, none of whom seem aware of its presence. In this image, Bush no longer is a part of this typical Texan environment. His cardboard cutout seems to fit into this scene

of Crawford life, but doesn't really belong there. This image perhaps characterizes Bush's new relationship to the town of Crawford, which once accepted the Bushes as "pretty nice people," but no longer acknowledges them as true members of the community.

Numerous quotes from town leaders and residents throughout the article reinforce this characterization of Bush: as someone who once was a welcome addition to this community, who was thought to bring valuable income and media attention to an otherwise unknown town, but who was later realized to be far more trouble than he was worth. Those costs include many practical considerations, such as "demands on the town's two-man police force, the wear and tear on its roads, and inflated property taxes, which have soared in the past two years along with property values" (Colloff, 2002, p. 113). Citizens of Crawford interviewed for the story cite inconveniences wrought by Bush's residency in their town, including the proliferation of Secret Service, journalists, and protestors who accompany him whenever he visits his ranch. These invaders are also connected to a real impact on the land itself through natural imagery: "the town was overrun with grasshoppers, which…gnawed their way through acres of Central Texas farmland. Which scourge residents dreaded more – crop-devouring insects or the swarming White House press corps – was debatable" (Colloff, 2002, p. 108). The outsiders (who are also likely Easterners) do not understand Crawford's values or its people; according to one resident, "It used to be you knew everybody when you drove by. Now everyone's a stranger" (Colloff, 2002, p. 160).

This article makes it plain that Bush no longer fits into Crawford, and neither is he entirely welcome within the town that symbolized his rural Texas identity when it was covered in the magazine's June 2000 article. The events in the two years between these two articles seem to have wrought a significant change in the magazine's willingness to attribute Bush with such a strong sense of Texan identity or with a tie to Texas land itself. Instead, it appears that the link to Texan identity that Crawford provided Bush is diminishing, at least within the pages of *Texas Monthly*, which appears in this 2002 article to be gradually withdrawing its assertion of Texan identity on Bush's behalf.

In this article, there is also an explicit acknowledgment that Bush has adopted Texan identity as a political tool for himself. This paragraph begins to sow doubt about the legitimacy of Bush's claim to Texan identity, and recognizes the efficacy of Texan identity for Bush's purposes:

> The White House Press Office understands that symbolism is at least as important as substance when the president is home on the range….[the ranch] is as much a political tool as a retreat.…Just as Lyndon Johnson used his ranch to redefine himself as a product of the West…so Bush has used his ranch to cast himself as a regular Texan, rather than a product of Northeastern privilege, like his father….Crawford had no sentimental pull for him; it was a practical choice…[because of its] large parcels of relatively cheap land for sale. Although Bush had never lived in the country and never wore a Stetson in Midland, he now chops wood, drives a pickup, and peppers his speech with folksy turns of phrase.

Clearly, this article acknowledges the utility of Crawford and of Texan identity more broadly – as represented here by Bush's Stetson, pickup, and diction – for Bush's political purposes. It is a tool for avoiding his father's Northeastern heritage and his political weaknesses; it is a foundation for his image as a "regular guy" who does physical labor and speaks informally. Even one of the Crawford residents interviewed in the article notices this convenience of Texan identity for Bush: "I'll tell you what really ticks me off. Bush portrays this as his hometown, and it ain't. He just barreled in here" (Colloff, 2002, p. 160).

Despite all of its seeming awareness of Bush's use of Texan identity as a political tool, this 2002 article in *Texas Monthly* never acknowledges how the magazine aided Bush in constructing that Texan identity for himself in its previous coverage of him. As shown in this analysis of the major articles on Bush from 1994 up to this point in 2002, *Texas Monthly* constantly reinforced Bush's claim to Texan identity in its coverage of him, and provided a convenient opposition to the East and to Washington in that process. The magazine does not recognize its own complicity in Bush's adoption of Texan symbolism. However, when Bush's political reality – his decreasing public approval and his increasing difficulty in achieving his policy goals – eventually becomes a liability for Texan identity, the magazine must revoke its grant of Texan identity to Bush in order to salvage that identity. If the magazine's attractiveness for readers is based primarily upon the purported value and desirability of Texan identity, then including a political figure whose fate seems increasingly uncertain in that Texan identity endangers the magazine's own appeal. Therefore, the subtle exclusion of Bush from authentic Texan identity

through the assertion that the identity was a mere political ploy is a means not just of resuscitating Texan identity, but also of preserving the magazine's appeal. Bush has not yet been "re-placed" into a different geographic identity with this 2002 article. However, as far as Texas is concerned, Bush is increasingly just another stranger.

"Maybe" Not a Cowboy: Bush's New Geographic Identity

The February 2004 cover of *Texas Monthly* makes an ambivalent statement about President George W. Bush. It features simply an unsmiling Bush against a white backdrop, shot only from forehead to knee in a strangely framed shot, with the word "Maybe" centered over him. This vague cover is much less strongly worded than the article on Bush within the magazine, which represents the real culmination of this "re-placement" process for Bush in *Texas Monthly*. Although the article is not conclusively negative about the governance of President Bush, it definitely portrays a leader who has lost sight of his true Texan identity, and instead has "gone Washington." The article blames Bush's political difficulties upon his loss of Texan identity and adoption of a Washington identity.

The image in the first two-page spread of this article (titled "The Man Who Isn't There") shows a milk carton inside an otherwise empty refrigerator. On the carton, where a missing child might sometimes appear, is instead a photo of George W. Bush, with the word "MISSING" over him and "Have You Seen This Man?" printed below. His name is given as "Governor George W. Bush" and he was supposedly last seen on January 20, 2001 – Bush's first inauguration day. The text below that date says "Disappeared from

Austin, Texas. Claimed to be 'a uniter, not a divider.' Promised to change the tone in Washington. If found, please contact the American people" (Burka, 2004, p. 78). Notably, the text refers to Bush as *governor*, not President, meaning that the picture relates to Bush as he was in Texas; it also equates his inauguration in Washington with his mysterious disappearance from Austin. What is implied by this image as a whole is that *Governor* Bush – as he was in Texas, with his big ideas for changing Washington and his style as a "uniter" – is gone. The geographic links included within this image are undeniable, and they continue throughout this article.

The text of this article largely concerns the author's own changing feelings about Bush and his policies, and explores how the author will vote in the 2004 presidential election. Although the author ultimately decides he will likely again support Bush, he expresses serious reservations about Bush and his administration. What is interesting in the context of this study, however, is the *geographic* basis given for these reservations. The author repeatedly describes his treatment during visits in Washington with Bush and other administration officials. He notes, for example, that "...the old atmosphere, so impressive in my Texas interviews, of open and big-picture discussions was nowhere in evidence" (Burka, 2004, p. 114). When Bush was in Texas and governing in a "Texas style," he would consider such ideas and possibilities. However, in D.C., his alleged closed-mindedness can be attributed to his relocation from Texas, specifically into the toxic Washington political environment – at least this is the rationale provided by *Texas Monthly*. Here again, the superiority of Texan politics, particularly as they pertain to

Bush, is made clear; once Bush is in Washington and begins to perform poorly, his failures are attributed to a loss of the "Texan" atmosphere.

In fact, Bush's loss of Texan identity is so thorough, according to this author, that even the common claim of Texan identity does nothing to improve the *Texas Monthly* writer's efforts to interact positively with Bush and other Washington officials: "Still, I was from Texas....Didn't that make a difference? Well, those days are gone" (Burka, 2004, p. 114). Instead, Bush has over-identified with a Washingtonian political identity, and, in the process, has lost sight of what Bush-the-Texan hoped to do once he gained power. The author states "I most wanted to ask about…Bush's desire to change the culture of Washington and what had become of it…But I don't think he's serious about it – not serious enough to do the hard stuff" (Burka, 2004, p. 115). Bush has not managed to bring that "Texan spirit" – so celebrated during the magazine's coverage of his inaugural festivities – inside the Beltway after all. Instead, the culture of Washington has absorbed him, and he has lost sight of what was important back when he was a "real Texan."

Ultimately, this foreign attitude and atmosphere so bewilders the author of this article that – even as he says he still "probably" will vote for Bush – he concludes that he doesn't even really *know* President Bush, despite having interacted with him frequently for over a decade at this point:

> The truth is, I don't know President Bush. The person I knew was Governor Bush. I really liked him. I still do. But I'm ambivalent about his alter ego…I'm betting

> [the Governor is] still around; we just haven't seen him for a while…You see, I knew *that* guy.

The Bush in Washington – although in reality the very same individual – is seen by virtue of his relocation to Washington to have become someone different, someone unknown to his Texas allies. This is why he is shown as having "disappeared" from Austin, where he was a positive political force, and having been changed by D.C. into someone entirely different.

This version of Bush is no longer a Texan, does not recognize other Texans appropriately, and fails to govern in a way that represents Texan values and goals, according to this article. Therefore, his problems are shown as largely rooted in leaving that Texan identity behind – even as Bush continues to claim Texan identity for himself in his public appearances at his ranch and elsewhere. Within the pages of *Texas Monthly*, however, the "re-placement" of Bush is well underway. This article represents a major breaking point in the magazine's apparent willingness to confirm Bush's Texan identity. Instead, it appears more strongly than ever before in the magazine that it wishes to re-assign him to a different identity, and the chosen identity is that of Washington, D.C., where different political ideals are maintained and lead to poor decision-making. This D.C. identity naturally calls upon the stereotypes of Washington politicians widely held by the public, thereby providing an easily understood rationale for Bush's failures in policymaking. It also serves as a way to redirect the responsibility for Bush's declining public regard away from his Texanness, and toward the assumed corruption that is perceived to be part of Washington political life. Therefore, Texan identity is salvaged

and once again represented as free from the taint of self-interest and dishonesty that apparently pervades Washington.

Although the February 2004 article discussed above is the first to demonstrate clearly the attribution of Bush's decline to Washington rather than Texas identity, the full revocation of Bush's claim to Texanness in *Texas Monthly* does not occur until October of that year. The most strident article in exiling Bush from Texas is titled "The Cowboy Myth," and its subtitle reads: "We're told repeatedly that George W. Bush's leadership style is rooted in Texas values, but what's so Texan about squinty-eyed moral clarity, shoot-from-the-hip decisiveness, and go-it-alone gunslinging?" (Ennis, 2004, p. 72). This article addresses Bush's claim to Texan identity, and seems to conclude that Bush – as in the Crawford article from 2002 – merely claims a false Texan identity, rather than fully demonstrating a true understanding of "real" Texanness and Texan leadership.

Under a picture of a dejected-looking Bush walking across a field on his Crawford ranch, the article notes that Bush has attempted to claim Texan identity as a political tool, with his ranch positioned "deep in the heartland of his 'Texas values'" (Ennis, 2004, p. 72). The use of quotes on "Texas values" implies a certain cynicism about Bush's real belief in those values (whatever the values might be). The author describes how the national media have used Bush's Texan identity as an explanation for his leadership style, giving it "an indelible made-in-Texas stamp" (Ennis, 2004, p. 72). However, the author uses this article to argue that true Texan leadership looks quite different:

> [Bush's] once-formidable job-approval rating wouldn't be [so low] if his decision-making owed more to a Texas history textbook than to his Harvard Business School case studies. You don't have to look further than the most familiar names in the Lone Star pantheon – Stephen F. Austin, Sam Houston, and Lyndon B. Johnson – to discover a distinctly Texan leadership model as contrary to popular expectations as it is to the president's [style]. (Ennis, 2004, p. 73)

Notably, the East is once again blamed for Bush's poor performance in office. Harvard, the stereotypical bastion of New England elitism, is blamed for Bush's loss of the Texan perspective, although it was never cited in the magazine as affecting his decisions when he was governor of Texas – back when Bush held high public regard, and the magazine claimed him as Texan.

So what *is* the authentically Texan leadership style? The four guidelines from Texan history that the author provides are "Look at the dark side"; "Don't be a Lone Ranger"; "It's about good decisions, not good values"; and "Forget the Alamo" (Ennis, 2004, p. 73). Each of these principles is illustrated with relevant examples from the mythic Texas "pantheon" mentioned above, and these principles are declared to be the "Texas rules." The author asserts that Bush operated according to these "rules" as governor, and even after September 11, though some criticized his early response:

> His fumbling in the first few days after the terror attacks…actually was instinctive Texas leadership in the Sam Houston tradition…Then along came Iraq, and Bush broke all the Texas rules…Far from being a made-in-Texas misadventure, Iraq

> underscores the difference between real Texas leadership and something more suited to the mythological Texas. (Ennis, 2004, pp. 76-77)

The critical distinction that seems to be sought by this author is that Iraq cannot be blamed on Texan identity. Bush did everything right, according to the Texan leadership style, until the Iraq war began. However, it was at that point after September 11 (which also marked the height of Bush's public approval rating) that he is said to have abandoned true Texan leadership and values, and adopted a "mythological" Texan style that caused him to make poor decisions. However, this author argues that someone with *real* Texan identity, drawing on the *true* (though truly problematic) Texan history that he cites, would not have engaged in the war as Bush did. Bush now misunderstands and misapplies the term "Texan" to his actions and to the values he personifies. Texan identity, it is argued, is something entirely different, at least within *Texas Monthly*.

But, again, what that Texan identity might be within the magazine is not clarified. Bush's mythological Texan identity and leadership style is deemed a misrepresentation of all that Texas stands for, but nothing is suggested in lieu of Bush's misrepresentation. According to this author, Bush has

> reinvented himself as a retro-Texan, a throwback to a place that never existed…as a result of his own spin and the media's credulity about all things mythically Texan, the Crawford ranch has morphed into George W. Bush's ancestral domain, the wellspring of those soundbite values that inspire his supporters and inflame his foes. (Ennis, 2004, p. 77)

This statement demonstrates and yet contradicts some of the essential elements of *Texas Monthly*'s portrayal of Bush over time. First, *Texas Monthly* has often celebrated "mythological" Texans within its pages, as demonstrated in this article's references to Stephen F. Austin and Sam Houston. However, this article seems to both question and reify the notion of a "Texas myth"; actually, it implies multiple myths, some good and some bad. What are those myths, and which is to be believed? This article does little to set forth an *alternative* leadership style – whether based on Bush's retro-Texan mythology, or on the purportedly "historical" accounting of mythical leaders Austin and Houston presented in this article. Therefore, it leaves "Texan leadership" – like "Texan identity" – largely undefined.

This article also cites "the media's credulity" about Texanness, but uses Crawford as an example – even as the magazine itself used Crawford as a way of reinforcing Bush's own Texanness earlier in its coverage of him, especially the June 2000 article discussed above. Was *Texas Monthly* also a victim of this "credulity"? Surely not, as it sees itself as the authoritative source on all things Texan; the magazine must have always had a sense of perspective on these topics, and considered wisely the assignation of Texan credentials and identity to those it covers. However, this article does not address how the magazine has dealt with these "Texan" concerns as they related to Bush in its own pages.

This article provides an ultimate divorce of Bush from Texan identity within the pages of *Texas Monthly*, fulfilling his re-assignment to a Washington identity a few months before in the magazine. The two 2004 articles analyzed here seem to accomplish

together the removal of Bush from Texan identity and his "re-placement" into a Washington identity. Texan identity is thus free from blame for his political failures, and readers can still feel positive about their own participation in that identity; after all, surely they do not misunderstand it as Bush did. However, the net effect of all this coverage is that Texan identity is ultimately undefined, but is shown to be a positive quality that may be assigned at will as a characteristic of whatever the magazine deems to be good and appealing. Readers learn that Bush doesn't represent Texan values, ideals, and leadership; but Bush's use as a negative example leaves nothing to hold onto if one wanted to know what Texan identity might actually *be*. Neither of these two articles, which set out to show that Bush is not Texan, contains much concrete discussion of what Texas identity then ought to be and what it could represent. That information would seem valuable to the magazine's readers who claim this identity, and who seek to understand this identity and apply it in their lives as Texas citizens.

No Longer a Texan, Bush Becomes Open to Critique

As stated above, *Texas Monthly* eventually disentangles Bush and his political decline from his Texan identity, and he is "re-placed" into Washington, where all difficulties may be understood through the popular assumption of the corruption of that place. Furthermore, once Bush is no longer identified as a Texan within the magazine, he and his policies may be critiqued far more vigorously. If Texan identity is no longer at stake, and criticizing Washington is a completely normal endeavor (indeed, is seen as a journalistic duty), then Bush-as-Washingtonian is available for any and all denunciation.

The magazine's coverage of Bush following these 2004 articles is decidedly more negative in tone. Although the full range of these articles is interesting, the focus of this chapter is how Bush's geographic identities are portrayed in the magazine, and therefore the criticism that contains a place-related angle is most relevant here. For example, an interview in May 2005 with columnist Liz Smith forthrightly mocks Bush's claim to Texanness. She tells her interviewer, "[I don't like] that my state would be defined by [him]. I think the whole Texas thing with him is such a put-on. I don't consider him a real Texan. When he tells you how great it was to grow up in Midland, I have to laugh" (Evan Smith, 2005, p. 118). This tidbit of information about Bush's background was of course cited by the magazine in 1999 as fundamentally shaping his character and personality; and yet here, Bush's West Texas childhood is openly scorned as a substantially life-changing experience. Clearly, the magazine now places far less value on Bush's claim to Texan identity, and even questions it outright.

The changes in Bush's political character from Texas to Washington are also a recurring theme in these later critiques of his policymaking. In March 2007, *Texas Monthly* ran a lengthy feature story in which it presented the views of a range of intellectuals and political figures on the possible ways that Bush could rehabilitate his potentially negative legacy before the end of his presidency. Although most of these discuss particular policy recommendations, many also cite the president's time in Texas as a model for him to follow as he completes his presidency. For example, Matthew Dowd, who worked on Bush's presidential campaigns, seeks the establishment of consensus-building bipartisanship in Washington, as imagined in Bush's Texas days:

> The biggest hope and aspiration…was that we could make Washington into a place, like Texas, where people could sit down, have a conversation, socialize, not judge one another as good or evil, not question intentions, and actually get things done. But when all the levers of power in Washington became Republican, creating consensus seemed to become unnecessary at the White House. ("The test of time," 2007)

Mark McKinnon, another former Bush campaign strategist, refers in his contribution to this piece to Bush's "idea of compassionate conservatism as it started in Texas," and the spirit of bipartisanship felt in Texas under Bush as governor ("The test of time," 2007).

Dowd and McKinnon echo a perception about Texan politics under Bush's leadership that was also presented in previous articles. According to this view, Texan politics under Bush operated in a friendly, cooperative manner, with a serious effort made toward bipartisanship and unity. However, with his ascent to power in Washington and his shift away from "true" Texan identity, Bush lost sight of his goal of changing the ethos of Washington, as well as of the concept of "compassionate conservatism." Both of these goals seem to have fallen by the wayside in this movement toward Washingtonian self-interest and corruption, as that place is presented here. Meanwhile, the general positive feeling attributed to Texan politics is reinforced and maintained.

The remainder of the articles about Bush in *Texas Monthly* are generally unremarkable with regard to any sense of geographic identity. Most refer specifically to his policy decisions and their problems, and to the fact that it is almost time for him to leave office – a moment that seems quite welcome, which *is* remarkable when one

considers how this textual analysis reveals *Texas Monthly*'s early efforts to claim and support Bush in the establishment of his Texan identity. Until about 2002, the magazine seems to have done everything possible to cite Bush's life history and personality as markers of his Texan identity. His political future seemed bright, and his ascent to power and to the national scene seemed to bode well for Texan status and political strength. It was a good time to be Texan and to assert Texan identity.

However, as world events and Bush's policymaking intervened, *Texas Monthly* was soon faced by the difficulty of incorporating the increasingly disliked Texan it had helped to create into its pages – within a magazine that elevates Texan identity to something literally worth subscribing to. In order to accommodate the need to write about this newsworthy "Texan" in the magazine, it seems that Bush was eventually denied the Texan identity he had once been so strongly assigned, and instead was "re-placed" into a Washington identity. That identity could easily absorb the full weight of any accusations against Bush of misconduct or failure. Washington is assumed to have those weaknesses, but Texas cannot – not if being Texan is still a source of pride, as it must be for *Texas Monthly*.

But if Bush is not Texan, and the attributes once assigned to him were somehow invalid or incorrectly defined, then what *is* it to be Texan? As a whole, the magazine's coverage of Bush leaves this question unanswered, or at least obscures the answer in layers of myth, history, and "values" that are never clearly elaborated. Once again, the malleability of Texan identity presented in *Texas Monthly* may have successfully

prevented readers from discouragement about calling themselves Texan, even in the face of dramatic public disapproval of a man they once called one of their own.

Chapter 7

Discussion

This study has addressed the ways in which *Texas Monthly* constructs Texan identity in its pages as a result of its editorial and business processes, particularly its acquisition by a larger media conglomerate, and its nature as a commercial, geographically defined media product. As discussed in the literature review, this is one example of the capability of media to provide a construction of a place and a sense of geographical context for the audience. The capacity of media to provide imaginative fodder for this process of identity formation is powerful and important in our increasingly mobile and global world. Journalistic products like *Texas Monthly*, I have suggested, offer readers an especially authoritative and even politically significant understanding of places, and so face a unique challenge of balancing their need for commercial appeal with this larger responsibility. *Texas Monthly* is just one example of the multitude of media products that must address the desire to produce a magazine that is economically rewarding within our capitalist media system; this demand upon these products may sway their editorial and business staffs toward a certain style of content that promotes a narrow view of their topic: in this case, of Texas itself, though a whole range of media products suggesting different identities could be equally implicated. Therefore, because the version of Texas identity presented by this magazine is subject to numerous forces, each of which contributes to the definition of this identity in distinct ways, this study utilized a media sociology approach to analyze *Texas Monthly*. This approach recognizes the varying

impact of economics, ideology, journalists' routines, and organizational structure upon media content.

Summary of Findings

As a first step in exploring the content of *Texas Monthly*, this study provided a content analysis of the magazine's editorial content and advertising. This content analysis revealed that *Texas Monthly* does contain ample coverage of political and social topics within Texas, and especially tends to cover politics through a personalized approach by using profiles of individual politicians. However, the magazine's representations of "Texans" are not diverse, tending to focus on white males and portraying non-white and female individuals in largely stereotypical roles. The image of Texan identity shown through this analysis did include a political component, but reflected a mostly homogenous vision of those involved in Texas in positions of political and social power. The content analysis also looked for changes in the magazine's content before and after its acquisition by Indianapolis-based media conglomerate Emmis Communications in 1998. This comparison revealed that the magazine's content was largely consistent in topical variety before and after this acquisition, except for a movement toward more "service"-oriented covers featuring travel and food. A comparison of the content before and after a change in editorial leadership in 2000 also did not demonstrate remarkable editorial changes; by this measure as well, the magazine has remained largely consistent in its blend of topics, and in its level of diversity among the Texans it includes within its image of Texan identity.

The content analysis showed that neither the magazine's acquisition by Emmis nor its editorial leadership dramatically changed the content of the magazine. Therefore, other forces are clearly at work along with these in shaping and defining Texan identity in the magazine. To help grasp the variety of forces at play in this process, in-depth interviews were conducted with editorial and business staff members at the magazine, as well as with representatives from the magazine's owner (Emmis) and its advertisers. These interviews addressed the ways in which the magazine's staff understood the version of "Texas" and "Texan identity" that they sought to portray in the magazine, and how their various types of work contributed to that portrayal.

In these interviews, it became apparent that although the editor-in-chief was thought to be the major force driving editorial content (according to both his staff and the Emmis executive interviewed), there was also a keen awareness among the staff of the desired audience for the magazine and the ways in which the magazine sought to reach that audience on its advertisers' behalf. The respondents also described the challenge faced by the magazine in both providing content for their imagined "old Texans," who understand and demand the "Texas myth," and "new Texans," those for whom the myth has little personal resonance. The Emmis acquisition was seen by the staff as increasing the magazine's profit pressures, and the Emmis representative described the greater financial "discipline" brought by the corporation that would enforce a purported balance between journalistic quality and profit. In general, from a business perspective, the issue of "Texan identity" in the magazine seemed largely irrelevant. The name *Texas Monthly* served a purpose as a brand for Emmis, and the magazine's established credibility aided

advertisers in building "brand equity," but a presentation of Texan identity within the magazine's editorial content was seen as extraneous to national and even Texas-based advertisers. These advertisers primarily seek an affluent, desirable audience who are thought to enjoy reading about upscale leisure opportunities within the state that conform to a sense of pride in Texan identity, rather than about a wide-ranging "sense of place" that might include that place's negative aspects.

The need to attract a wealthy demographic, according to some interview respondents, led to a shift in editorial content toward positive stories that supported that audience's lifestyle and attitudes. Certainly, the magazine's audience would probably prefer to read positive stories about their assumed Texan identity, instead of feeling their security in this identity threatened or questioned. However, maintaining that positivity in the face of political conflict and difficulty could be challenging for the magazine. Given this situation, in which the demands of journalism to provide a full and complete picture of reality face off against the need to appeal to a paying audience, this study examined how *Texas Monthly* would grapple with a difficult "Texan" political figure: former Texas governor and current President George W. Bush. The textual analysis considered the entire body of articles on Bush from 1992 to 2007, and noted that when Bush seemed to have a bright future in Texas and later on the national scene, *Texas Monthly* helped establish a strong Texan identity for him within its pages, and was happy to claim him as a representative of the state by declaring his "not-Eastern" nature.

However, beginning around 2002, when Bush's public regard had begun to decline, the magazine gradually revoked that Texan identity, and eventually by 2004

asserted a new identity on his behalf: that of the Washington insider, who has lost his true Texanness and therefore lost his way politically. In this process, the magazine establishes a sense of Texan identity and Texan politics that is in opposition and superior to an Eastern identity; however, it does little to define what that Texan identity might otherwise be, if Bush no longer fits it. This "re-placement" of Bush salvages Texan identity after the damage that association with Bush might have wrought upon it for some readers of the magazine, thereby allowing *Texas Monthly* – as a symbol and "textbook" for one's own Texan identity – to remain a pleasing product and purchase.

Texan Diversity versus *Texas Monthly*'s Homogenous Texan Identity

As a whole, these results suggest that the sense of Texan identity present in *Texas Monthly* is limited due to the interaction of various forces. Although the content analysis did not show substantial changes in the magazine's content following the Emmis acquisition, the magazine's desire to attract a wealthy, upscale audience for its advertisers was undoubtedly present before and after the acquisition. The interview responses suggest that the magazine's drive for profit may have increased following the Emmis acquisition, although this pressure did not manifest itself as might have been expected in this particular content analysis. Therefore, I believe that the need to attract this advertising-friendly audience has always been present, and is likely intensifying now with the somewhat shifting barrier between advertising and editorial noted in the interview responses. These pressures will affect the magazine's content in subtle ways.

For example, it seems that the magazine – despite ostensibly representing one of the most diverse states in the nation – has not managed to increase its portrayals of racial and ethnic minorities in its pages. It also has not included the entire geographic area of the state in its editorial content; coverage of places outside major cities and the usual rural tourist destinations is still rare in the magazine. If the magazine is "about journalism," as its editor asserted upon assuming his role in 2000, then it would seem to need to represent its *entire* state to its audience. It is understandable that the magazine could need to make this a gradual shift in content, as the editor stated in his interview; even its most enlightened subscribers would probably be surprised to see rapid and major alterations in the magazine's scope.

However, the magazine can continue to expand its version of "Texan identity" to include non-white, less wealthy individuals, and also Texans from all areas of the state, even if they are not seen as part of the target audience for the magazine. As an advertising-funded publication, the target audience must undoubtedly be a consideration in forming the magazine's content, but these challenging topics could be made appealing to any reader if handled creatively and represented as opportunities for personal action, as the Emmis executive characterized the goal of the magazine. And, if not for the reason of fulfilling its responsibility as "journalism," then perhaps the magazine will perceive the need to diversify its content for business reasons. If, as noted in these interviews, the magazine "doesn't look like Texas," who will be its audience long-term as its portrayal of Texan identity increasingly diverges from the demographic reality of actual Texans?

Portraying Politics When All That is Texan is Good

Texas Monthly's coverage of political topics, surprisingly, did not decline as might have been expected following its acquisition by Emmis. However, these results did point to some other areas in which the magazine's unique nature as a commercially appealing image of Texan identity might affect its discussion of political realities. First among these was the magazine's notable tendency to discuss politics through a personal lens, using profiles of individual politicians. Stories that took a broader approach to issues were in the minority within the magazine's political coverage.

As Patterson describes, personalizing issues is convenient for journalists because this approach provides a story that can be told with characters and conflict (fitting *Texas Monthly*'s desire for strong narratives); however, this personalization is also a problem when the individuals who have represented a particular issue then fade from the public spotlight, taking their issue with them (1994, p. 192). As a result, it can be difficult to direct and sustain public attention for a specific issue when this personalization is the preferred approach to discussing politics. In reading *Texas Monthly*, one might also feel as if the politicians portrayed in the magazine are often selected for their scandalous or celebrity status, rather than their positions on particular significant issues. These politicians draw the audience's attention for their notoriety, positive or negative, not primarily for their value or failure as policymakers. The magazine, however, again likely considering its criteria for a "good story" and its desire to appeal to a large, profitable audience, still opts to cover politics in this personalized manner.

Given that *Texas Monthly* is one of the few statewide media outlets that *could* address state politics in a journalistically sound manner, it is even stranger that the magazine would reduce the problems of a state to their personification in single individuals' profiles. It would seem more useful to the audience – if not as dramatically pleasing – to address the range of serious issues affecting the state *as* issues themselves, and to explore them in ways that add to public knowledge and ability to alleviate those concerns. The political dimensions of Texan identity presented in the magazine, which are mainly based on individual cases of politicians and citizens, are vague, and therefore less than useful for their audience in considering actual responses to issues in the magazine.

As the textual analysis of the coverage of George W. Bush also demonstrated, the defense of Texan identity necessitated by the commercial appeal of *Texas Monthly* also constrains its representation of politics. The need to maintain a positive feeling among the audience about their Texanness further delimits the opportunity to point out serious issues within the state that deserve the audience's attention. If there is a risk that the audience will start to feel bad about being Texan, then this analysis suggests that the approach to that topic may be altered in a more positive direction in order for *Texas Monthly*'s business model to persist. While local newspapers may respond positively to politicians' visits to their cities, as mentioned in the literature review (Peake, 2007), an ongoing geographic relationship to a politician claimed by a particular publication as a "native" apparently cannot be so unrelentingly positive. A downturn in public opinion may even

lead to a disconnection of that individual from the place if the relationship becomes too damaging to the place identity promoted by a publication.

In the case of Bush and *Texas Monthly*, not only does the audience fail to get a coherent or thorough sense of Texan identity in his coverage – due to its construction primarily as "not Eastern" – but they are also provided with far less critical inspection of Bush because he is represented in the magazine's early coverage as a "native son" and "fellow Texan" who is immune to such critique. It is to the magazine's advantage to be able to claim Bush as a Texan; not only does his political potential speak well of Texan identity, but he is also simply a popular figure, a political celebrity, whose appearance on the cover will likely attract readers. Furthermore, *Texas Monthly*'s ability to gain access to Bush for interviews boosts its own credibility and reputation. Additionally, other media, especially national media, can refer to *Texas Monthly*'s coverage, and will likely tend to credit it as authoritative, given its proximity to Bush's time in Texas. (In fact, a Lexis-Nexis search finds more than 450 articles in U.S. newspapers and major world publications that specifically cite *Texas Monthly* information on President Bush, thus demonstrating the authority of this magazine in portraying him for other media outlets.) Therefore, the magazine's own reputation is aided by constructing Texan identity around Bush and using him as a device to assert the superiority of Texan identity above all other geographic identities; other media that utilize *Texas Monthly* as a source supplement this effort.

However, the magazine also (consciously or not) helped develop Bush's self-portrayal as a rugged Texan. It became part of Bush's strategic geographical construction

of himself as Texan, particularly as opposed to his father's New England identity. Gitlin notes the longstanding utility of such a geographic identity within the political arena, arguing that politicians who can personify the myth of the American West represent "something central about how Americans imagine themselves…Through the instrument of his vigorous and straight-talking persona, the hero promises to reinvent the past and call it the future" (2007, p. 88). As noted in the literature review, West and Carey (2006) have further demonstrated the deliberate ways in which this geographic identity was constructed for Bush throughout his presidency, and especially in the "war on terror."

By buying into Bush's self-construction as Texan, and then amplifying it within the magazine's early coverage of him, *Texas Monthly* not only diminishes its audience's critical inspection of Bush as a worthy candidate and policymaker, but also assists his administration's attempt to apply this "Texan" narrative and identity to his actions. Rather than independently evaluating how well Bush adheres to its own version of Texanness (a definition which did not seem to exist at the magazine), the magazine seemed to seize the opportunity to bring Bush into the Texan fold. And, of course, its "re-placement" of Bush into a Washingtonian identity to account for his problems also suggests a purity of Texan politics that is blatantly inaccurate. This assertion of a common Texan identity – without much content or critique – leads the audience into a feeling of support based on that shared identity. Pels (2003), mentioned above, described this phenomenon in his discussion of politicians' need to inspire "recognition of self" among their constituents. Texan identity provided one convenient method by which Bush could inculcate just such a loyalty among Texans.

A letter to the editor following the "Maybe" cover story on Bush demonstrates one *Texas Monthly* reader's feeling that Texan allegiance should supersede political critique:

> How could you put 'Maybe' across the photograph of *our* president? What happened to 'I got your back' and 'Remember the Alamo'? We may or may not agree with how he gets the job done, but President Bush is a Texan and one of our own. Perhaps my bitterness will subside and I'll be able to read [this] article. ("Roar of the crowd [letters to the editor]," 2004)

My concern is that the need for the construction of a positive Texan identity in *Texas Monthly* will engender just this kind of comradeship around a nebulous Texan identity itself, rather than around a desire to evaluate politicians for all their virtues and weaknesses. The way Texan identity is used in *Texas Monthly*'s discussion of politics does not encourage this kind of critical assessment; rather, it elevates "Texanness," as indistinctly presented by the magazine, as the sole criterion that truly matters.

But What *is* Texan Identity Anyway?

Another serious issue in the magazine revealed by this study is its relative lack of information about what Texas identity actually *is*. From flipping through the magazine, a reader can easily have the impression that the characteristic of Texanness, according to *Texas Monthly*, may be primarily attributed to white, urban, and wealthy individuals. Furthermore, a reader might see how this "Texan identity" is used to shape the portrayal

of politics in the magazine, as discussed above. However, the issue of a "Texas myth" within the magazine is worthy of greater attention.

As noted in the interview responses, *Texas Monthly* still relies on a concept called the "Texas myth" to determine its editorial content. This myth seems to refer to the notion of Texas as distinct and unique, by virtue of its history, and asserts that special characteristics of its people and its geography led to that status:

> Texans had strongly asserted and the nation had…readily accepted the idea of Texas as a highly individual place and Texans as a distinctive people…Triumph in war over a much larger nation, a decade of independence recognized by the leading powers of the world, statehood on its own terms, and all these within a setting huge and promising sustained a strong sense of power and individuality. (Meinig, 1969, p. 62)

These tropes of the Texas myth still persist, not only in the pages of *Texas Monthly*, but also in other media, such as movies and even the Texas Department of Transportation's own marketing campaign, which uses the slogan "Texas: It's Like a Whole Other Country" (Office of the Texas Governor, 2006). The Texan myth flatters those who choose to claim this version of Texan identity for themselves, as it grants them those attributes of "power and individuality."

In *Texas Monthly*, the story of Texas that established this Texas myth is often cited, such as in stories on the Alamo and the King Ranch, cited as examples of this phenomenon by an interview respondent. Profiles of people who fit this purported Texan persona then also qualify for inclusion in the magazine. However, the magazine doesn't

seem to engage within its editorial content (nor, evidently, among its staff) in much discussion of what this Texan identity is really all about. It is assumed to be understood, and it is also expected that readers will understand and even enjoy its construction as superior to other geographic identities, such as the New England identity to which it is juxtaposed in the coverage of Bush.

However, it seems apparent that merely constructing Texan identity through references to the state's mythic past – as with the Alamo – or through these types of oppositions to other geographic identities does not lend Texan identity much substance in and of *itself*. The audience for *Texas Monthly* learns about their chosen geographic identity primarily through stories that discuss the past in mythic terms or that represent Texanness through positive portrayals of Texan individuals. And, again, few negative statements can appear in the magazine about anything that is shown as worthy of the Texan label – the reality that led to the "re-placement" of Bush following his political decline.

If these are the foundations for Texan identity presented in *Texas Monthly*, due to its need to maintain a positive and commercially appealing version of Texanness in its pages, it does not seem that the magazine is fulfilling its journalistic responsibility to provide a thorough and critical perspective on its subject to its audience. Certainly, its business model demands that advertisers' and the audience's preferences be taken into consideration. These advertisers, however, as discussed above, do not really care much about the nature of Texan identity in the magazine; the audience the magazine attracts is their only real concern. It is therefore up to the magazine's staff to come up with ways to

represent Texan identity in the magazine on terms that balance journalistic duties with this audience concern.

Given the magazine's reputation and stated desire for journalistic excellence, it is surprising that the basis for Texan identity in the magazine is ultimately rather shallow and superficial. This magazine has the opportunity to represent the state and its issues in their full range and complexity: it is not bound to news values like newspapers, it has the space to include lengthy articles, and it has an audience that seems to think being Texan is valuable and that would probably like to know how to preserve and improve their state. However, this opportunity is diminished by the magazine's commercial desires and the way in which it appears to have chosen to address them. Texan identity in *Texas Monthly* does not ultimately seem to be not a complex and complete construction that enriches the audience's view of Texas and provides them opportunities and information for participation within it. Instead, this version of Texas identity seems to be primarily a fuzzily defined label that is assigned to individuals and topics at will to satisfy the magazine's financial convenience.

Limitations of This Study and Suggestions for Future Research

Some of the limitations of this study include its content analysis sampling method, its focus on feature stories in *Texas Monthly*, and its lack of an audience analysis component. With regard to the sample used in this content analysis, the sample was not evenly composed of issues of the magazine produced before and after the Emmis acquisition. Rather, because the interview data were gathered with current staff members,

the content analysis sample focused on the most recent issues created under the leadership of the current editor, using a census of those issues. However, this resulted in somewhat of an under-representation of the pre-Emmis acquisition content of the magazine. A larger sample of the pre-Emmis issues of the magazine might have created a somewhat different picture of the magazine's content and any changes over time.

The content analysis also focused on feature stories and their representations of Texas identity. The use of feature stories to represent the most significant editorial decisions made by the magazine's staff may not be entirely fair, as the magazine does contain a variety of other columns and content each month. Arguably, the feature stories do attribute to their topics a special value and worthiness when shown to warrant such lengthy coverage. However, the diversity of topics and people covered in the magazine might ultimately have been broader if this sample had included its content outside the feature stories.

Finally, this study assumes that the magazine's audience will tend to adopt certain ideas about Texas and Texan identity through reading *Texas Monthly*. This assumption is based on the body of research on media effects, including such theories as agenda-setting and cultivation theory. However, this study did not expressly examine whether or not the *Texas Monthly* audience does in fact tend to adopt the version of Texan identity presented in *Texas Monthly*. Future studies might explore how this magazine, along with other media constructions of place, create a sense of "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991) around this image of Texan or another geographic identity, and what consequences that

has had for individuals in those audiences in terms of political and civic participation in their places.

Furthermore, as Kaniss (1991) found in her study of local newsmaking processes, many news organizations face the challenge of representing their particular locality's concerns while also maintaining a large and desirable audience for advertisers. The content of *Texas Monthly* appears, based on this study, to have also been affected by this dilemma. This issue is likely to affect an increasing number and variety of journalists. For example, many newspaper companies are today finding it profitable to purchase the newspapers of the small towns and suburbs that surround the major urban centers where their papers are published. This is known as "clustering…[which] allows the company to consolidate a number of functions, chiefly on the business side but sometimes editorial as well, for maximum efficiency" (Roberts, Kunkel, & Layton, 2001, p. 4). Newspapers now engage in "geographic strategies," grouping these newspapers into "strategic marketing groups" or "regional groups" (Bass, 2001, p. 109). This is the case in Austin, Texas, for example, where Cox Newspapers owns not only the *Austin American-Statesman*, but also eight surrounding small newspapers: the *Bastrop Advertiser*, the *Smithville Times*, the *Lake Travis View*, the *North Lake Travis Log*, the *Pflugerville Pflag*, the *Round Rock View*, and the *Westlake Picayune*, plus the Austin-based Spanish-language *Ahora Sí!*

This process often also allows newspaper companies to present an improved demographic profile of the entire region now covered by their papers to potential advertisers, through adding bedroom communities and wealthy suburbs to a more

demographically varied urban circulation. This phenomenon also occurred in California, in the creation of the combined "San Jose-Contra Costa market, which comes with some very sexy Bay Area statistics when the calculating is done the right way" (Gorney, 2001, p. 353). This more demographically attractive readership, achieved through ownership consolidation, mirrors *Texas Monthly*'s goal of the "improved circulation list" that was described in the interview results.

"Clustering" permits these newspaper companies to operative collectively at a higher profit, and some of these publications might actually then have more resources for reporting. However, do each of those smaller communities lose out as a result of their newspapers' acquisition and absorption into the larger corporation? The individual "sense of place" that these smaller, independent publications might once have offered may become lost when they transition into their role as one part of a much larger regional strategy.

This discussion of newspapers may seem less than relevant to this analysis of *Texas Monthly*; they are a different medium, with unique issues and processes. However, the point here is to emphasize that newspapers, just like *Texas Monthly*, must balance the need to represent their unique places to their audiences fully and completely with the desire to increase their profitability. As a result, their own individual place-based identities are subject to many of the same concerns that have been revealed in *Texas Monthly*'s own construction of Texan identity. Future studies of newspapers might examine these issues of geographic identity construction, especially in the political realm, to determine how well these changing newspaper operations continue to represent their

local places to their audiences. Also at issue is how well those representations might serve local residents in participating in their places' civic lives.

Conclusion

To return to the ideas of Anderson (1991), Appadurai (1996), and Thompson (1996) briefly, *Texas Monthly* appears to provide its audience with a feeling of imagined community around the notion of "being Texan," a geographic identity that suggests a range of "fantasy" and self-formation possibilities that readers may choose to enact in their personal lives. The magazine provides a sense of what is possible for Texans – who they may be, what they may do, and what is important to one worthy of that label. The magazine's audience can take these ideas – these "possible lives" offered them as Texans – and integrate them into their own desires and experience

However, the imaginary of Texas offered by *Texas Monthly* is limited. A critical reader must acknowledge that the primary purpose of the magazine is not to aid its readers in the formation of a Texan identity through the selection of components from those offered in its pages. Accordingly, this study has revealed that this is not the desire nor the perceived mission of the magazine among its editorial or business staff. Those who compose the magazine acknowledge what McQuail calls the "consistent biases" of media representations, particularly the need to attract a financially rewarding audience of readers for advertisers in order to ensure the magazine's profit. The concern of the magazine's staff is not the identity formation of its audience around the concept of Texanness; rather, it is primarily profit. As Dahlgren (2003), discussed above, has

suggested, such advertising-funded media have encouraged the further intertwining of the identity of the consumer with that of the citizen, to the point that they can no longer be divided.

Texas Monthly does only represent one state, and it is just one magazine. However, as this study has shown, it is subject to a variety of forces, and its production involves a range of considerations that are common to many journalistic products today. While it does not seem to have been directly subject to serious intervention in editorial content by its corporate owners, it has perhaps more subtly adjusted its depiction of Texan identity – even as vaguely as it is constructed – to accommodate a positive feeling and commercial appeal within its pages. More troubling, that need has also manifested itself in its portrayal of politics, which creates concern about the magazine's ability to represent such issues critically and fully for its readers. These are issues that affect the entire spectrum of journalism today, whether focused on a specific place or not, and regardless of medium.*Texas Monthly*, moreover, represents a particular identity that will be impacted by increasing mobility and demographic changes, as will many other identities that specialized media may support; therefore, our attention to this particular magazine allows us to consider the potential effects of these forces upon a full range of other media products.

Given these insights into the production of *Texas Monthly*, we must also question the future of media centered upon geographic identity, which looks even more problematic; the concerns raised here have broader implications. As media companies face an increasingly global, diverse, and mobile audience – who seek to engage the full

range of mediascapes and identities available to them across multimedia forms – how will they understand their audiences, and what type of identities and self-formation options will be made available to individuals to use in understanding themselves? Media organizations will have to adjust their offerings to accommodate audiences' changing needs and desires, yet their primary purpose – for commercial media – will remain the generation of profit, not the encouragement of diverse and thoughtful citizenship. The "ideological vectors" of consumerism and citizenship that Dahlgren describes may no longer be held in a tenuous balance, but rather one may thoroughly vanquish the other. Currently, as the example of *Texas Monthly* demonstrates, the editorial and business structure of many media organizations will promote consumerism, and will socialize their staff into the production of messages that support that end goal. In a political milieu too often characterized by apathy, cynicism, and manipulation, journalism runs the risk of serving as an accomplice to the denigration of citizenship, or at the least, to the promotion of consumerism as a primary goal in audiences' lives and identities. News in any medium that fails to engage and activate its audience does nothing to alleviate these problems.

If *Texas Monthly* and similar media truly seek to serve the public, they can end their commodification of Texan and other identities, and provide a more multifaceted account of the world and what it means to be a citizen within it. At least within Texas, *Texas Monthly* readers, as active citizens, might then be able learn what it *could* mean to be Texan: working cooperatively toward progress in the state, in order to make it a better place to live for all those within its borders.

Appendix

Texas Monthly Content Analysis Codebook

V1
Issue date _____

V2
Issue quarter for constructed year sampling
1. January-March
2. April-June
3. July-September
4. October-December

V3
Magazine element
1. Cover photo
2. Full-page advertisement
3. Feature story (those listed under "Features" in each issue's Table of Contents)
4. Feature story photo

V4
Ethnicity of subject (for all elements)
1. Person/people – White
2. Person/people – Hispanic
3. Person/people – Black
4. Person/people – Asian
5. Person/people – Middle Eastern
6. Person/people – Other or can't tell
7. Person/people – Mixed group of individuals
8. Not applicable (story/ad/photo is not primarily focused on people)

V5
Gender of subject (for all elements)
1. Male
2. Female
3. Mixed group of individuals
4. Not applicable (story/ad/photo is not primarily focused on people)

V6

Representation of person (field/occupation; for cover photos, feature stories, feature story photos)

1. Government/law/courts
2. Business/education
3. Entertainment (actors, musicians)
4. Athletes/sports
5. Ordinary people (e.g., town citizens)
6. Criminal
7. Victim of crime
8. Religion
9. Artists/authors
10. Mixed (group of people with representatives of more than one field)
11. Not applicable (story/ad/photo is not primarily focused on people)
12. Other (including models)

V7

Backdrop of picture (for cover photos, full-page ads, feature story photos)

1. Rural setting (country, park)
2. Urban setting (city)
3. Texas icon setting (Alamo, King Ranch)
4. Other/not applicable/can't tell

V8

Texas symbols associated with person (Lone Star images, clothing, flags; for cover photos, full-page ads, feature story photos)

1. Yes
2. No
3. Not applicable (photo not of person)

V9

Feature Story Topics

1. Sports profile
2. Business(person) profile
3. Entertainment/arts profile
4. Politician profile
5. Travel/destinations
6. Food, recipes, restaurants
7. Historic event
8. "Concept" in Texas (includes Bum Steers)
9. Political issue
10. Crime story
11. 1st person essay/experience/memoir
12. Entertainment story (not specific profile)

13. Business story (not specific profile)
14. Other profile
15. Education story
16. Other sports story
17. Fiction

V10
Cover Photo Type

1. Model
2. Criminal/crime theme
3. Travel destination
4. Actor/actress
5. Musician
6. Politician/political theme
7. Athlete/sports theme
8. Other entertainment-related
9. Other
10. Unspecified “Texas person”
11. Illustration (drawing/cartoon)
12. Businessperson
13. Food

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